HOW UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF COLOR EXPERIENCE MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

One of the stated purposes of multicultural and diversity classes is to provide students of color with positive educational experiences. Little is known, however, about how students of color experience multicultural education, particularly in the undergraduate diversity classes that are increasingly prevalent on college campuses. Using constructivist grounded theory and critical race theory, this study examined multicultural education as experienced by undergraduate students of color. Specifically, this study investigated what characterized positive and negative experiences in multicultural classes and how students of color felt about multicultural education through interviews, a focus group, and an online survey with 17 undergraduate students of color. Many themes emerged, including the importance placed by students of color on discussions about racial inequality and the role of the professor in creating a safe environment in which students felt their personal experiences and knowledge were valued. Students of color discussed both the harmful consequences of negative experiences of multicultural education and the potential for positive multicultural education experiences to uplift and transform. Students, despite criticisms of the ways in which multicultural education is currently implemented, voiced overwhelming support for the inclusion of multicultural and diversity classes in the curriculum. Included in the discussion are limitations of the study and implications for future research, practice, policy, and social justice.

Dedicated with love to my mother and father.

Thank you for my education.

CONTENTS

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I would like to thank all the students who participated in this study. Their enthusiasm and insights were inspiring. I hope I have done justice to their voices.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States is changing: Barack Obama is the first African American[1] president and Sonia Sotomayor the first Latina justice on the Supreme Court. One experience that Obama and Sotomayor share is that both attended historically and predominantly White colleges. Both have described their years at college as pivotal times in their lives, and their undeniable successes at these institutions and beyond are a testament to the power of opening the doors of higher education to students of color. At the same time, both Obama and Sotomayor have spoken of their struggles at colleges that were overwhelmingly White.[2] In the decades since Obama and Sotomayor attended college, educators have realized that students of color at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) face unique challenges, and conversely that colleges face unique challenges in serving this population. The rise in multicultural education has been one of the responses to these challenges.

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[1] Throughout this paper, I have chosen to employ descriptors of race/ethnicity preferred by the persons described.

[2] I capitalize both Black and White in this paper. As Crenshaw (1998) noted, capitalization reflects a belief that the people described comprise "a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun" (p.1132). I chose not to capitalize "people/students of color" because of my uncertainty about the utility of characterizing people of color as specific cultural group.

Though multicultural education has achieved a degree of acceptance in U.S. colleges and universities, there is still much that is unknown about it. In this chapter, I will present an overview of the status of undergraduate students of color, touching upon how they experience college and the college classroom. I will introduce the theoretical foundations of multicultural education and examine the evidence on how colleges are implementing multicultural educational ideals. Finally, I will review the research on the effects of multicultural education on students, in order to argue that more work needs to be done to understand how undergraduate students of color experience multicultural education at PWIs.

The College Experience for Students of Color

Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of students of color in higher education has increased, with the most significant leap occurring in the 1970s (Anderson, 2002). As of 2008, students of color comprised 29% of the college population, and the rate of growth of the enrollment of students of color over the last decade outpaced that of White students (Ryu, 2008). Though this rate of growth has slowed in recent decades, it is estimated that by the middle of this century around half of college age adults in the United States will be people of color (Anderson, 2002). As the demographic of the country shifts, so does the demographic of PWIs. The issues surrounding the education of students of color will only increase in importance as this shift occurs.

In addition, there is a critical need to examine the education of students of color at PWIs because they tend to underperform compared to their White peers on measures such as retention, achievement, and engagement with the college campus (Zirkel, 2008).

For example, the percentage of first-time freshmen who were either still in college or had completed degrees 3 years after their enrollment is 73% for African American students versus 83% for White students (Ryu, 2008). In addition, White students earn more degrees per students enrolled (14 degrees per 100 students) than students of color (Asian Americans: 13 per 100, African Americans: 11 per 100). Though difficult to estimate due to lack of research and poor record-keeping, Native American students are estimated to have the lowest retention rates of all (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Though part of this underperformance can be accounted for by differences in the availability of resources and in preparation before college, these factors alone do not fully explain why many students of color do not succeed to the same extent as their White peers (Fischer, 2007; Hurtado, 2002). African Americans at predominantly Black institutions, for example, graduate at higher rates than African American students nationwide (Anonymous, 2010). There seems to be something about PWIs that is leading many students of color to perform at lower levels and to drop out at higher rates than White students. This recognition lends urgency to the need to implement and successfully carry out education that deals with diversity on campuses.

The Unwelcoming Campus

Unfortunately, many studies paint a grim picture of college life in PWIs as experienced by students of color. A qualitative study of undergraduates at feeder schools for the University of Michigan Law School reveals that many students of color are quickly disillusioned by the difference between how universities present themselves and the reality these students face upon arrival (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). A number of

students in this study noted that their colleges presented themselves as multiculturally oriented in their literature, as well as on campus tours. Students noted that this multiculturalism seems little more than an institutional facade due to lack of support for students of color after being recruited. This study is supported by evidence that the discrepancy between the projection of a multicultural campus and the actual actions of the college creates a sense of disappointment and a lack of trust on the part of students of color (Lee, Jeanett, & Darnell, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Watson, 2002). This discrepancy may result from diversity policies that are enacted with good intentions but without a clear sense of how to implement an overarching vision of diversity (Chang, Chang, & Ledesma, 2005; Helm, Sedlacek, & Prieto, 1998).

What students of color face, instead of the promised multicultural experience, is a campus climate that can feel cold and hostile (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Morh, 2000; Powell, 1998). As Smith (1997) described, "The literature on campus climate and its negative effects on minority student populations centers on nearly universal reports of feelings of alienation, hostility, and difficulties fitting in to prevailing institutional cultures" (p. 23). Isolation, alienation, and stereotyping appear to be prevalent for students of color in PWIs (Fries-Britt, 2002; Gurin, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lee, Jeanett, & Darnell, 2002). Qualitative interviews with students of color reveal, again, isolation, distrust, and feelings of inadequacy as they adjust to college, with many of them noting that they believe they must deal with challenges that White students do not have to face at PWIs (Watson, 2002). A review of the literature revealed that students of color indeed face additional obstacles at PWIs, such as lacking faculty mentors and facing culturally homogenous pedagogy (Quaye, 2009).

Racial Climate on Campus

The campus climate for students of color is hostile in part due to racial tensions and divisions. A survey of overall campus beliefs found that deep racial tensions and division exist on campuses nationwide (Altbach, Lomotey, & Rivers, 2002). In fact, college students cited diversity issues as the main cause of conflict on their campuses on three out of the five campuses surveyed (Levine & Cureton, 1998b). Many studies have shown that, in accordance with people of color in general, students of color perceive more racism than White peers and have a more negative view of the campus racial climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Pewewardy & Frey, 2002; Quaye, 2009). Specifically, African American students reported more racial campus conflict than White students, with most African American students reporting high levels of racial tension and conflict (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Gurin, Matlock, Wade-Golden, & Gurin, 2004). Though overt racism was described as rare, targeted racial hate incidents appeared to be on the rise in the 1990s (Altbach et al., 2002; Levine & Cureton, 1998b). A study by Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) found that African American males on campus faced an atmosphere characterized by "hypersurveillance and control" (p. 573), where frequent negative encounters with campus and community police led to these students being defined as outsiders instead of as capable members of the college community. Given the level of racial tension described by students, it is perhaps not surprising that many students noted that campuses are largely self-segregated (Altbach et al., 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Watson, 2002).

Whether overt or subtle, the negative campus climate for students of color has effects both psychological and academic. When racial tension on a college campus is

high, students are unlikely to believe that the institution cares about diversity, regardless of its stated commitments (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Though both Black and White students perceived racial inequalities on campus, those inequities impact Black students' commitments to college significantly more than White students (Cabrera & Nora, 1993; Helm, Sedlacek, & Prieto, 1998). Black students have reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with college compared to their peers (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). In addition, Smith et al. (2007) described how continual microaggressions, in addition to the more overt stresses associated with being an African American male at a PWI, can lead students to experience racial battle fatigue, the result of dealing with constant feelings of "disbelief, rage, alienation, fear, invisibility, pain, and disappointment" (p. 573). Racial battle fatigue refers to the cumulative toll of living in an environment fraught with racism and racial oppression. Pierce (1995) provides another way to characterize the struggles of students of color on campus by describing racial oppression as the control of a victim's space, time, energy and motion (STEM). In a college setting, students of color experience racism through their lack of control over their classroom experiences and the amount of energy they expend dealing with racial issues on campus.

These findings are particularly damaging because, for students of color, a sense of welcome and caring on campus has been shown to be one of the keys for student retention (Fischer, 2007; Powell, 1998; Solorzano, 2005). For example, studies have found that perceptions of a poor racial climate and discrimination on campus negatively affected integration into campus life for Latina/o students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006). Perhaps most tellingly, successfully dealing with racism is positively related to academic achievement for African American, Hispanic,

and Asian American students, suggesting that racism is a factor in academic underachievement as well (Fuertes & Sedlacek, 1994).

Despite, or maybe because of, the racial tensions on campus, a few studies have found that race is a taboo issue on college campuses. Students of color have noted that race seemed to be a forbidden topic, except in ethnic studies classes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Levine & Cureton, 1998a). One surveyor observed that students in general were more comfortable divulging details about their sexual lives than discussing multicultural issues (Levine & Cureton, 1998b). Students appeared to wish that they could have a dialogue about race but felt that they lacked the resources to do so, and students of color and White students alike noted that they felt that their college did not do enough to help facilitate cross-cultural dialogue (Bruch, Higbee, & Siaka, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Given the high levels of racial tension described by students, as well as the negative effect of that tension on students of color, the need to facilitate productive cross-cultural dialogue appears critical.

Marginalization and Stereotypes

Another theme that appeared across studies is the experiences of students of color of being marginalized, invisible, and stereotyped in comparison to White peers. Many students of color felt overlooked in general in PWIs (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Powell, 1998; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Watson, 2002). Others noted that campuses normalized Whiteness and made others feel marginal and unwelcome (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007). Many expressed a sense of frustration that White students appeared not to be interested in issues

of concern to students of color, such as racism, and instead displayed a sense of entitlement. Students of color have complained that they are often mistaken for others of the same ethnicity (Levine & Cureton, 1998a) and are seen as members of a group instead of as individuals (Watson, 2002). Some expressed dismay at the tendency of PWIs to group students of color into uniform categories.

Adding to the sense of marginalization, students of color often reported concerns that they are viewed as "special admissions" due to affirmative action, and thus not as capable and deserving as White students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Chang & Witt-Sandis, 1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Watson, 2002). This tendency to view students of color as under-qualified seems pervasive despite the fact that the vast majority of students of color are admitted under the same admissions standards as White students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). Many students of color noted that they feel the need to prove themselves as competent in the face of doubt on the part of faculty, other students, and also because of internalized self-doubt (Fries-Britt, 2000). The need to prove that they belong in college is one of the most common obstacles faced by students of color as a result of stereotyping and marginalization on campus.

Satisfaction with College

Given the racial tensions, marginalization, and negative attitudes faced by students of color at PWIs, it is not surprising that students of color tend to report lower levels of satisfaction with college. A survey by Ancis et al. (2000) showed that White students reported more satisfaction with college than either Asian or Black students. A survey by Harper and Hurtado (2007) showed that White and Asian students were the

most satisfied with college and Black students the least satisfied, with Native American and Latina/o students in between. Harper and Hurtado also noted that many PWIs are negatively viewed by the Black community. Interestingly, Harper and Hurtado found that White students erroneously assume that students of color are as satisfied with college as they are, perhaps reflecting a lack of communication and awareness on campus.

Despite the problems that have been identified, there is good news about the experience of students of color at PWIs. Students of color reported that they learned from roommates with different racial/ethnic backgrounds and were able to make connections with diverse friends (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). They also noted that interpersonal relationships with other groups were positive overall. Students of color have also reported positive benefits from associating with peers of the same racial/ethnic background while at college (Villalpando, 2003). Despite their feelings of discouragement and discomfort, students of color still believed in diversity and in multicultural education and reported that attending PWIs had improved their views on race, which suggests that they benefit from multiculturalism in ways that may not be well-defined (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). As many have noted, the margin can be a place of strength, discovery, and resistance as well as of challenge and struggle (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Collins, 2000; Riesman, 1963).

As students of color become more numerous (though still under-represented) in colleges in the U.S., they continue to face unique pressures and challenges at PWIs that indicate that the efforts of these institutions to welcome diverse students may not be translating into a lived experience of multiculturalism. Racial tensions, divisions, marginalization, stereotyping, and other assaults contribute to racial battle fatigue and

lower satisfaction for students of color in college. These experiences indicate that the project of creating optimal conditions for students of color is still a work in progress for many institutions of higher education as they become increasingly diverse.

Students of Color and the College Classroom

Diversity on campuses can exist in a number of forms (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Gurin et al. note that campuses can have structural diversity (diversity in the people, generally students, who are merely present on campus), informal interactional diversity (diversity in how frequently and well diverse people interact on campus), and classroom diversity (diversity in how people learn and interact in the classroom setting). Structural diversity is necessary but not sufficient for creating informal interactional and classroom diversity. Though informal interactional diversity and classroom diversity are both important, classroom diversity perhaps best reflects how colleges as institutions are handling multicultural concerns. How students of color experience the college classroom is therefore a central concern in multicultural education.

Classroom Pressures

The general themes of alienation, isolation, and marginalization that students of color experience on the college campus are also reflected in the college classroom (Watson, 2002). Within the environment of the classroom, instructors as well as other students contribute to these feelings. Some students reported blatant instances of racism by instructors and, more commonly, by students in the classroom who express racist statements that go unchallenged (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Hurtado, 2002; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). More often, however, students of color experience more

subtle challenges in college classrooms at PWIs. Their general feelings of invisibility are amplified by exclusion in the classroom, whether by lack of material addressing their concerns or by nonverbal microaggressions by faculty and other students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; D. Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Some report feeling isolated and excluded from relationships between White students and between White professors and White students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). Fears of being seen as incompetent are sometimes underscored by accusations of cheating (Allen & Solorzano, 2001) or by a general sense that the institution views students of color as substandard in terms of academic achievement (Watson, 2002). This can lead high achieving students of color to feel isolation or even that they must camouflage their abilities (Fries-Britt, 2002).

In addition, students of color face additional pressures in the classroom, such as the expectation that they put aside their identities and assimilate into predominantly White classrooms (Quaye, 2009). Classroom stereotypes lead Latina/o and Black students to feel that if they perform well, they are exceptions to the rule, and that if they do not perform well, they are confirming stereotypes (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). Steele (1998; 1995) has described how the threat of being stereotyped leads to underperformance. Specifically, Steele's experiments indicated that African American males perform significantly worse on standardized tests if their test results could seemingly contribute to negative stereotypes. Students of color reported worrying that their actions will be generalized to the groups in which they are members (Tatum, 2003), likely because of a tendency of majority culture members to view ethnic and racial groups as monolithic rather than as diverse (Watson, 2002). African American and Asian students were more

likely to report being stereotyped and unfairly treated by faculty than White students (Ancis et al., 2000; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002).

The pressure of dealing with stereotypes is likely exacerbated by the "only one" syndrome experienced by students who find themselves as the sole member of their racial or ethnic group in a class (Quaye, 2009). The "only one" syndrome is the flip side of invisibility: Students reported feeling "always under the microscope" (p. 158) or "on trial" (Watson, 2002, p. 70) due to standing out as a non-White person in an overwhelmingly White environment. Students reported feeling that they have to represent their ethnic or racial groups (Allen & Solorzano, 2001) or that others in the class, instructors as well as White students, may pressure the student to act as a spokesperson or "native informant" (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005). Students often greet these pressures with a feeling of dismay (Watson, 2002). Some students of color "complained about continually being asked to educate Whites about minority issues," noting that their purpose in coming to college was not to educate White people (Watson, 2002, p. 108). Unfortunately, students may be trapped by a feeling that if they do not educate White students, they will be viewed as aloof or resistant (Chesler et al., 2005). These findings illustrate that students of color face challenges in the college classroom because of factors such as racism and being of minority status.

Discomfort in Discussing Race and Diversity

Students of color may have many reasons to avoid discussions of racial and diversity issues. Many have noted that they tend to avoid discussing race in class due to fears that they will become too emotional, because they are unable to separate themselves

from issues that White students may approach as abstractions (Quaye, 2009; Watson, 2002). Tatum (2003) noted that people of color may fear speaking of their experiences due to fear of losing control, or fear of "our own anger and frustration" (p. 198). A consequence of remaining silent, however, may be that students of color internalize blame and self-doubt. Students of color may be caught in a bind when faced with discussions about race in class, with the cost of speaking out and the cost of silence both high. On the other hand, students of color also noted that discussions about race can be superficial in nature (Watson, 2002). This in itself can be distressing, as the caution of White students and faculty in discussing race can appear to be unwillingness or lack of caring about racial issues to students of color (Chesler et al., 2005).

The classroom appears to be a place of stress and struggle for students of color in college. In addition to the invisibility, marginalization, and stereotypes they experience on campus in general, students of color in the classroom encounter heightened visibility that is based not on their individual abilities but on their membership in a group. They can feel singled out and stymied by expectations that they serve as educators in their own classes, expectations that are made even more challenging because of the difficulties of speaking of race and ethnicity in general. While PWIs have been making strides over the years in structural diversity, classroom diversity is an area which colleges must examine and improve in order to serve students of color on campus.

Multicultural Education in College

Concurrent with the rise in number of students in color in higher education is the rise in multicultural education. Early battles in multiculturalism dealt primarily with

securing access for students of color, such as ensuring that students of color had the opportunity to take the same classes and receive presumably the same education as White students (Altbach et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005). Though issues of access remain salient, new multicultural concerns emphasize not only providing access but also providing optimal conditions for students of color. The aim of multicultural education is for students of color not only to be present in colleges and universities but also to thrive and succeed in institutions that were not originally designed with their needs in mind. More and more institutions of higher education are recognizing the need to respond to an increasingly diverse campus (Altbach et al., 2002; Chang, Chang, & Ledesma, 2005; Chesler; Kitano, 1997; Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Hurtado, 2002). A survey of campuses across the country revealed that 62% either have in place a formal requirement that their students study content related to cultural diversity or are currently developing such a requirement (Schneider, 2001). The American Association of Colleges and Universities has encouraged such requirements, in recognition of the growing need to respond to and recognize campus diversity.

As college campuses increasingly develop and implement multicultural education, the need to understand multicultural education and its effect upon students becomes more pressing. Currently, an empirical understanding of how multicultural education takes place and of its impact upon students is in the early stages of development. A better understanding of multicultural education and its effects on students of color can lay the foundation for its continued growth and success in serving college students and, through college students, society at large.

Models of Multicultural Education

The basis of multicultural education, as described by Banks (1995), consists of the beliefs that all students should be able to learn, that educational reform is needed to give all students the opportunity to learn, and that these goals must be reached through a continual process of reform and change. Banks' (1994) influential model presents five dimensions of multicultural education. First, multicultural education supports content integration, or requiring that material in the curriculum be diverse. Second, multicultural education involves examining knowledge construction, to reveal how perspective informs knowledge and the conclusions that people reach. Third, multicultural education attempts to reduce prejudice, such as by providing positive images of different groups. Fourth, multicultural education works towards equitable pedagogy by using different approaches to learning and teaching. Finally, school cultures and structures are empowered through multicultural education to include students and to create, among other things, a positive school climate.

Significantly, Banks (1994) noted that most educators approach the first dimension, content integration, by recognizing contributions of diverse people (such as by adding facts to preexisting units) or by the addition of special sections that deal with diversity. He argued that both of these common approaches keep the content related to diversity marginal. Instead, Banks (1995) advocated for a transformative approach to content integration, in which subject matter is viewed from a multitude of different perspectives and approaches, so that students can see how different viewpoints, traditions, values, and ideals all inform the way people understand and act in the world.

Kitano (1997) built upon these ideas to describe three types of courses: exclusive, inclusive, and transformed. An exclusive course is traditional and mainstream in its presentation of history and knowledge, and other perspectives, when they are included, are depicted in a stereotyped manner. An inclusive course presents the mainstream and traditional viewpoints but then adds other perspectives. A transformed course actively challenges traditions, creates new conceptions and ways of thinking, and shares power among instructor and students alike. In a transformed course, the content is changed along with instructional strategies, class activities, assessments, and classroom dynamics. With their descriptions of transformative multicultural education, both Banks (1994, 1995) and Kitano argue that multicultural education must progress beyond a merely additive approach in order to be successful.

Reasons for Multicultural Education

One of the justifications for multicultural education has been to improve the experience of students of color in college in general and in the college classroom in particular. This is only one of the reasons, however, for the rise in multicultural education. In the landmark Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), Justice Powell presented one of the foundational arguments for diversity in education by arguing for the value of having a variety of viewpoints on a campus. Since that time, researchers such as Chang (2005), Gurin (2004), and Hurtado (2005) have argued that, although diversity of the student body (structural diversity) is important, it alone is insufficient for bringing about the variety of viewpoints and subsequent enriched dialogues thought to be essential to modern education. Multicultural education has been

posited as way to translate campus diversity into positive learning experiences and outcomes. To elaborate, Gurin, Nagda et al. (2004) have argued that diverse viewpoints interrupt automatic thinking and support critical thinking, which is especially important during college because it is during their college years that many students develop their identities and learn to see different intellectual and moral perspectives. Hurtado (2005) has noted the importance of encouraging students to extend their knowledge beyond what is already familiar.

Though these arguments could apply equally to both students of color and White students, it seems likely that many students of color do not require exposure to difference in the same manner as White students; they are more likely to have experienced different cultures prior to college due to their minority status in American society (Banks, 1991). Multicultural education, however, is also theorized to help students of color by presenting them with representations that reflect their own experiences, leading them to be more engaged in college (Quaye, 2009). Multicultural education is therefore thought to help students of color by recognizing their unique cultures while at the same time helping White students understand difference. In both of these aims, multicultural education strives to break the myth that knowledge as well as society is homogenous and monolithic.

Specifically, many educators have argued that change to curricular content to include material related to different racial and ethnic groups is necessary to create positive educational experiences for students of color (Banks, 1991; Kiang & Emura, 1997; Quaye, 2009; Solorzano et al., 2000). The demand for curricular change heightened in the 1990s, leading to the creation of ethnic studies programs as well as to the

expansion of the existing curriculum to include additional material (Smith, 2006). Many students of color have themselves advocated for a more inclusive curriculum, sometimes agitating by means of protest when that change did not occur, and students of color have supported diversity in the curriculum at higher rates than White students (Altbach et al., 2002; Smith, 2006; Stephens, 1999). Advocating for multicultural education in general, and curricular reform in particular, have been part of the battle to increase the visibility and, subsequently, the power of students of color on campus (Chesler et al., 2005; Solorzano et al., 2000).

Implementation of Multicultural Education

As Chesler et al. (2005) described in an overview of multicultural education on college campuses, curricular reform is the most common aspect of multicultural education that has been focused upon and implemented. Generally, Chesler et al. observed that content dealing with diversity is added to syllabi if there is extra time, without an overarching view of racial, cultural, or other diversity issues as related to the curriculum. On another level, colleges have attempted to diversify the whole curricula by taking a "menu" approach, in which students have a choice of several courses that meet some criterion for multiculturalism. Often, however, the lack of clarity in the criterion leads to inconsistency in the menu of courses. This additive approach has been the most popular in multicultural education (Brown & Ratcliff, 1998). As Zirkel (2008) noted, additive content integration is the simplest method of attempting multicultural education; however, truly adequate multicultural education includes not only changing the content of

the course but also changing institutional dynamics, critically examining power and knowledge practices, and creating empowering relationships in the school setting.

Schneider (2001), in reviewing multicultural education for the Association of American College and Universities, wrote that students are often asked to choose among classes dealing with diversity in the United States, world culture, world history, cultural issues such as social hierarchies, or foreign languages in order to fulfill a diversity requirement. She argued that it is not enough for students to take one of the above, but, instead, that students "need all the above studies. A single course or even two courses on diversity is at best a down payment on the kinds of knowledge citizens need" (para. 10). Indeed, it appears that multicultural education as it is currently implemented at many colleges falls well short of the transformative ideals described by Banks (1994) and Kitano (1997). The full integration of multicultural education into the entirety of courses, with a clear vision of how courses are organized, structured, and sequenced, seems far off (Brown & Ratcliff, 1998).

Many researchers have argued that colleges are not doing enough to support multicultural education. Welburn (1999) argued that it is not enough to add multicultural courses, but that the content and the delivery of such courses must be carefully considered. Chang (2003) argued that the positive effects of diversity will only occur if campuses do active work to attend to the needs of students of color. Tanaka (1998), who has objected to multiculturalism on the grounds that it creates defensiveness and divisiveness, noted that simply teaching the content of other cultures does not create cultural competence unless students are taught how to use that knowledge in their everyday lives.

Others have noted that teaching multicultural education courses is a specialized skill for which many faculty members are unprepared (Chesler et al., 2005; Vacarr, 2003). For example, faculty members may themselves be unfamiliar with issues faced by students of color, while others may mistakenly assume that taking a single course or workshop in multicultural education is adequate preparation for dealing with multicultural and diversity issues (Watson, 2002). Instructors have described how difficult it is to deal with "hot moments" that often arise when students discuss issues related to diversity and have noted the temptation to avoid such moments rather than using them for educational purposes (Vacarr, 2003).

Though colleges appear to be making progress in multicultural education, there is still a notable discrepancy between the vision of multicultural education as transformative and empowering for students and its implementation. Further measures, such as attending to the content and delivery of multicultural courses, are needed to bridge this gap.

Criticisms of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has come under attack for being, among other things, divisive, reductive, parochial, and undemocratic (D'Souza, 1991a, 1991b). Banks (1995) argued that true multicultural education is none of these things, because the result of teaching students to be critical and to engage actively in the construction of knowledge is that students are better able to understand complexity and to participate in the democratic process. Others have argued that multicultural education serves merely to mask segregation and inequality (Platt, 2002), or that multiculturalism is essentializing and creates grounds for additional prejudice (Okin, 1999; Webster, 2002). These concerns are

most directly addressed by examining how multicultural education has been implemented and its impact on colleges and college students. The ideal of multicultural education has been embraced by many colleges and universities, and models of multicultural education explain how students will be both challenged and empowered by that education. How well colleges carry out these ideals may prove a determining factor in giving credence to the proponents of multicultural education.

Effects of Multicultural Education

Multicultural Education and White Students

Many articles about multicultural education describe pedagogical theories and strategies, while relatively few examine the effects of multicultural education (Asada, Swank, & Goldey, 2003). Of the articles about the effects of multicultural education, many are accounts of how multicultural education affects White students (e.g., Ka-yee Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chi-yue, 2008; O'Grady, 1998; Tanaka, 1998). Often, studies on multicultural education do not differentiate between effects on White students versus effects of students of color. Because the sample sizes in these studies are generally overwhelmingly White, they likely describe effects on White students with some accuracy; whether they represent the students of color in their studies is doubtful.

For example, one study found that a sample of students, over 90% of whom were White, felt neutral or slightly positive towards multicultural initiatives on campus, and preferred that those initiatives take the form of voluntary workshops rather than educational requirements like classes (Asada et al., 2003). Another study found that undergraduates, approximately 75% of whom were White, who were enrolled in a course

in ethnic studies, women's studies, a service learning course, or a course that fit the university's diversity requirement, were more likely to report positive interactions with diverse peers and to be engaged in social actions (Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005). A similar study with a sample drawn from a mostly White university showed that taking a diversity course decreased students' prejudices against Blacks (Chang, 2002). A study showing that students in a multicultural course reported gains in tolerance and perspective taking provided no data on the demographics of the sample, though presumably most of the students were White, as the study was conducted at a PWI (Palmer, 2000). Another study with a sample of both White students and students of color showed increased awareness of prejudice after taking a multicultural course (Wright & Tolan, 2009). Astin's (1993) study found that students who took courses in ethnic studies or women's studies had strong commitments to promoting racial understanding and that those who attended cultural awareness workshops were more culturally aware and engaged in social activism. Unfortunately, this study did not provide any demographic data on the students. These studies also did not account for self-selection into multicultural courses and workshops.

In one of the more comprehensive studies on the effects of diversity on campus, Gurin, Dey, Gurin, and Hurtado (2003) compared seniors in college who had taken a multicultural course with peers matched by demographic factors and other background factors. This matching was an attempt to eliminate some of the self-selection factors that could account for differences between students who seek out multicultural experiences from those who do not. Students who had taken a multicultural course were more motivated to take the perspectives of others, thought more about their own group

membership, learned more about other groups, and recognized more commonalities with other groups, for a sample consisting of both White students and students of color. In a related study, Hurtado (2005) found that a pooled sample of White students and students of color who took a multicultural education course showed stronger complex thinking skills, better retention, improved cultural awareness, increased interest in social issues, and more support for diversity initiatives than students matched with them on demographic and other factors who had not taken such a course. Students who had taken the course were also more likely to view racial inequality as a problem in society.

One study has documented what appears to be a backlash against multicultural education, again using samples of mostly White students who had taken a multicultural class (Bruch, Higbee, & Siaka, 2007). Students in this study reported feeling that diversity and multicultural concerns are overemphasized. Multicultural education was also perceived as an attack on White students. Some students did report positive reactions to multicultural course content, but they tended to frame their opinions in terms of learning to be nonjudgmental and accepting of variety, rather than in terms of privilege, power, and oppression. These findings seem to confirm that these students, at least, have not benefited from transformative multicultural education (Banks, 1994, 1995; Kitano, 1997).

More recently, Martin (2010) reported on the experience of students in a course on race and racism. This qualitative study described two primary themes that arose from an examination of student responses to the course. Both White students and at least one student of color stated that they had increased in self-awareness and awareness of racism as a result of the course. In addition, White students and students of color also

commented on the importance of the course, and their sense that the course should be required for all students. Though informative about the effects, both positive and negative, of multicultural education, the tendency of this and other studies to group White students and students of color together limits their analyses (Engberg, 2004).

Multicultural Education and Students of Color

Studies that examine White students and students of color separately reveal that multicultural education affects students in different ways. For example, one study showed that taking a multicultural education course was associated with halting the deterioration of attitudes towards other groups for White students but had no effect on attitudes for students of color (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000). Another found that, although taking a racial or cultural workshop positively affected openness to diversity positively for all students, this effect was 4.5 times stronger for White students than for students of color (Pascarella & Edison, 1996). Higher satisfaction with college was significantly related to the inclusion of material related to diversity in the curriculum for White and African American students but not for Chicano or Asian American students in another study (Villalpando, 2002). Laird's (2005) study showed that, although taking a diversity class increased academic self-confidence for students overall, students of color were significantly more likely to report negative interactions with peers, which in turn reduced academic self-confidence. This study also found, however, that students of color were also more likely to report positive peer interactions, perhaps statistically cancelling out the effect of negative interactions. In a review of studies on the effect of multicultural education in reducing racial bias, Engberg (2004) found significant differential effects

across racial groups. Specifically, students of color were found to benefit less from interventions such as diversity workshops and trainings, compared to White students. Though multicultural education was found to decrease racial bias overall, Engberg noted that the tendency to aggregate samples across racial lines could cloud this result. He found that 22 of 74 studies yielded mixed or nonsignificant results and suggested that no definitive conclusions could yet be drawn from the literature about the effect of multicultural interventions. He noted that research needs to analyze groups consisting of White students and students of color separately.

One sample in the multipart study by Gurin et al. (2003) was large enough to separate out analyses for students of color who had taken a multicultural course. This sample found that exposure to multicultural experiences, including but not limited to coursework, was related to increased perspective taking and to seeing values in common with other groups for White students. However, there was no relationship between perspective taking and multicultural coursework for students of color. In addition, enrollment in a multicultural course positively impacted thoughts on diversity or multiculturalism for White and Latino students, but not for Asian students (Gurin et al., 2002). For African American students, enrollment in a multicultural course was actually associated with more negative views on multiculturalism and diversity, and with a more negative self-assessment of academic skills. Diversity was found to have a positive effect on students of color, but largely through informal interactional diversity (such as through informal interactions with friends and roommates) rather than through classroom experiences. For example, informal interactional diversity was positively related to citizenship and cultural engagement for White students and students of color, but

classroom diversity experiences showed consistent positive effects for White students only. These results strikingly illustrate that multicultural education does not affect White students and students of color in a uniform fashion. As the researchers themselves wrote, "Students of color respond differently to opportunities for diversity experiences and have distinct interaction patterns that affect different outcomes" (p. 352). The most mixed results were found when looking at students of color and experiences taking multicultural courses.

Very few studies have focused on the impact of undergraduate multicultural education at PWIs on students of color. In general, access to positive information about their ethnic groups appears have a positive impact upon identity formation for students of color, but studies showing this have been small and retrospective (Zirkel, 2008). In one such study, Kiang and Emura (1997) examined the effect of taking an Asian American studies course. Overall, taking the course had a positive impact on students of all racial backgrounds, with alumni of the course self-reporting gains in domains as varied as education, career, family life, and friendships. Many noted that taking the Asian American studies course increased positive feelings about their university as an institution. Very few students stated that taking the course greatly impacted their sense of isolation (2%) or led to very bitter or discouraged feelings (0%). This study was notable in that it was able to identify that Asian American students reported unique effects from taking the course, including an increase in identity and social awareness. White students, in comparison, were more likely to report increased awareness of racial stereotypes and improved interactions with people from different backgrounds. Kiang and Emura noted

that this study indicates the need to more systematically examine the effects of undergraduate diversity requirements.

Others have spoken on a more anecdotal basis about the experience of students of color in multicultural classes. For example, Tatum (2003) wrote:

> Students of color often enter a discussion of racism with some awareness of the issue, based on personal experiences. However, even these students find that they did not have a full understanding of the widespread impact of racism in our society. For students who are targeted by racism, an increased awareness of the impact in and on their lives is painful. (p. 145)

Anecdotes like this also suggest the need to further explore the experience of students of color in multicultural courses.

Overall, the literature reveals that undergraduate students of color experience multicultural education in ways distinct from White students. There is evidence that students of color benefit in unique ways from multicultural education, such as through increased identity awareness. At the same time, other studies suggest that multicultural education does not benefit students of color as much as White students. Some evidence even suggests that students of color in undergraduate multicultural education courses may face challenges that White students do not face. The question of just how undergraduate students of color experience multicultural education remains largely unexplored.

Evidence from Graduate Multicultural Education

Relatively more research has been conducted on how multicultural education affects students of color in graduate school, specifically in the training of counselors. This likely reflects how the field of counseling has emphasized the importance of developing multicultural competence as an essential element in training. In one study,

counselors in a multicultural counseling course were found to differ in their experience of the course based on their racial background (Coleman, 2006). Graduate students of color were significantly less likely to identify interaction with peers as a positive learning experience in the course. Students of color in a graduate multicultural course in mental health stated that they felt frustrated by expectations that they are experts in racism and that it was their responsibility to share their life experiences (Jackson, 1999). A greater percentage of students of color in a graduate clinical psychology multicultural course reported feeling negative emotions such as uneasiness, being disturbed, being offended, vulnerability, and being tired during this class (Lenington, 1999). More reported feeling left out. Students of color most commonly named the apathy and lack of interest on the part of other students as barriers to learning. One participant noted she felt doubts about being able to make people understand her experiences, because she was struggling to understand herself. On the other hand, students of color reported feeling less annoyance and frustration compared to White students. More felt appreciated, challenged, and empowered.

One study on the reactions of graduate students in a graduate multicultural course found such a wide array of negative reactions that the researcher employed the concept of resistance as an explanatory framework (Jackson, 1999). In psychotherapy, resistance generally refers to a client's unwillingness to change, even when change is in the client's self-interest (Weiner, 1975). Jackson described three forms of resistance that might be displayed by students of color in a graduate multicultural course. Jackson identified behaviors such as withdrawal, silence, or appearing distressed as character resistance (resistance as a defense or coping style). Others displayed character resistance by

aggressive behavior, dominating the class due to their sense of mastery. The second form of resistance, resistance to content, occurred when students felt trapped by their inability to avoid material or experiences that are painful to them. Interactions with faculty resulted in what Jackson characterizes as the third form of resistance, transference resistance. Transference resistance occurred when students of color either felt especially threatened or challenged by a faculty member of color, or conversely, as students of color over-identified with faculty of color. Transference resistance also happened when students transferred their feelings about the content matter onto faculty members. Any of these forms of resistance resulted in anger, silence, withdrawal, resentment, or denial, among other negative reactions. By employing the concept of resistance, this study risks pathologizing the reactions of students of color, as well as obfuscating critiques of the class itself. Despite these drawbacks, this study speaks to the unique fears and challenges that graduate students of color face in multicultural courses.

Jackson (1999) also identified a common theme in graduate students' reactions to multicultural classes: the fear of being exposed and threatened. Many graduate students of color reported the belief that they would be attacked and ridiculed for their beliefs. Jackson described how graduate students of color are hesitant to speak about race in classrooms for fear of being negatively judged. She noted the double bind that results because of students' anxiety in discussing their experiences of racism with the class. Jackson speculated that students struggling with their own racial identities and cultural issues would be especially affected. She further noted that struggles can occur not only between students of color and White students, but also within ethnic groups, especially if

members are at different stages of identity development, and between ethnic groups and international students who were not raised in the racial climate of the U.S.

A survey study, conducted by Lenington (1999), that examined the experiences of first year psychology graduate students in a multicultural training class in which White students formed the majority also revealed graduate students' fear of exposure. Lenington found that students of color felt less safe than White students. This difference persisted throughout the class and increased as the class went on, so that students of color felt even less safe, relative to White students, at the end of class compared to the beginning. The most commonly cited reason for this lack of safety was the fear of the reactions from other students in the class. Students of color consistently rated their ability to share lower than other students.

Evidence from studies of graduate education supports the possibility that undergraduate students of color experience unique challenges in multicultural courses. Foremost among the challenges faced by graduate students of color in multicultural courses are the fears of being exposed, threatened, or attacked in class. These fears have led many graduate students of color to feel less safe in multicultural classes than their White peers. It seems likely that undergraduate students of color face similar challenges in their own multicultural education.

Factors Contributing to Multicultural Course Success

There has been very little research about what factors contribute to the success, whether measured by student satisfaction or by various learning outcomes such as increased awareness, of multicultural courses. A study that focused solely on White

students demonstrated that multicultural courses are more successful when they begin by focusing on reducing resistance by encouraging self-examination and class community (Brown, 2004). Another study identified group dialogue as the most significant factor related to students' learning about diversity (Wright & Tolan, 2009). Similarly, in Lenington's (1999) study, students in a predominantly White sample cited discussions and open sharing as the most useful aspects of their multicultural class. These students requested more diversity of students and smaller class sizes for optimal learning. A survey of almost exclusively White students in a teacher education program found that films, group presentations, and class stories and discussion were the activities most commonly identified as impactful in a multicultural class (Peterson, Cross, Johnson, & Howell, 2000). Tatum (2003) described how students' awareness of racial identity models positively contributed to interactions and learning for all students in a class on racism. Other studies have focused on how White racial identity development impacts multicultural and diversity learning (e.g., Lawrence, 1998; Luther, 2009; Martin, 2010), but no studies on identity development for students of color and multicultural education were identified. For students of color, it seems likely that factors such as the race and ethnicity of the instructor, the expertise of the instructor, the ratio of students of color to White students, and the racial/ethnic identity of the students would affect their experience of multicultural education, but these speculations lack empirical evidence.

In summary, little is known about the effects of college multicultural education on students of color. Self-reported differences among ethnic and racial groups, anecdotal evidence, and studies from more specialized graduate training suggest that students of color do not experience multicultural education in the same manner as White students.

Furthermore, some evidence suggests that participating in multicultural education courses may be especially difficult or distressing for students of color. This possibility is ironic considering that one of the goals of multicultural education is to represent and empower such students, but perhaps not surprising considering that the implementation of multicultural education in colleges appears to be inconsistent at best. Additionally, factors such as the race and ethnicity of the instructors, the training and preparedness of instructors, and the ratio of students of color to White students may contribute to the positive or negative effects of multicultural education, but these along with other specific factors have not been studied. In order to better understand how successfully to implement multicultural education, we must better understand the experiences of students of color with multicultural education. This understanding will, I hope, illuminate the current state of multicultural education in a PWI and the experiences of students of color relative to that education, with the purpose of identifying their needs and suggesting how PWIs can serve the students of color who play an ever increasing role on college campuses.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study aimed to increase understanding of multicultural education by examining the experiences of undergraduate students of color in a PWI. As students of color enrolled in increasing numbers on college campuses, the assumption was that they would automatically benefit from the same education and in the same ways as White students. Instead, educators increasingly recognized that colleges must actively work to create positive conditions for the students of color on their campuses. Similarly, simply

requiring multicultural coursework may not automatically improve conditions for students of color. More in-depth study is needed to determine how students of color experience multicultural education and what they view as its positive and negative aspects.

The questions guiding this research were:

1. How do undergraduate students of color at a PWI experience multicultural education? How do they interpret and make meaning from these experiences?
2. How do students of color describe both their positive and negative experiences of multicultural education? What factors do students of color believe contribute to making experiences of multicultural education both positive and negative?
3. Do students of color feel empowered by multicultural education? If so, how and in what ways? If not, why not?
4. What support, criticisms, or suggestions for improvement will students of color offer regarding multicultural education?

Qualitative research is especially appropriate for investigating this topic in a number of ways. First, this study aimed to understand the lived experiences of students of color in relation to multicultural education. How students of color interpret and understand their experiences is a critical component of the impact of multicultural education. In addition, qualitative research is an avenue for empowering students of color by giving them a voice, and treating them as the subjects rather than the objects of education (Montecinos, 2004). Some scholars, particularly in critical race theory, have argued that, by allowing the students of color to speak on their own terms, qualitative research helps to combat the history of silencing non-White voices (Fernández, 2002;

Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). In addition, qualitative research is particularly appropriate when little is understood about a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Finally, it is my hope that the voices and perspectives of students of color will help to de-center and disrupt conventional narratives of multicultural education and to create empathy and understanding for those who have not traditionally been viewed as holders of wisdom about their own educational needs (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

CHAPTER II

METHOD

This study investigated the experiences of undergraduate students of color in relation to multicultural education at a PWI. One of the aims of multicultural education is to empower students of color through avenues such as: presenting them with positive representations of their groups, helping them to understand their own cultures, and illuminating and reducing stereotypes and harmful inequalities in society (Banks, 1994, 1995). Little is known, however, about the actual impact of multicultural education, particularly as it applies to students of color (Engberg, 2004). Previous research suggested that students of color experience multicultural education in ways that are distinct from White students (Coleman, 2006; Engberg, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000; Pascarella & Edison, 1996) and that classroom discussions surrounding race and ethnicity can be very difficult for students of color (Jackson, 1999; Lenington, 1999). Criticisms and surveys of the field also suggested a discrepancy between how multicultural education is conceptualized and how it is being carried out (Brown & Ratcliff, 1998; Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Schneider, 2001). Thus, it was the intent of this study to illuminate how multicultural education is impacting students of color by focusing on their experiences, as well as the interpretations and meanings they attach to those experiences. Hopefully, this study, by

examining multicultural education as it is currently implemented, provides a foundation for continual progression towards the goal of emancipation, transformation, and equality for all students.

Paradigm Underpinning the Research

Critical race theory (CRT) was founded by legal scholars out of frustration with what seemed to be the failure of civil rights litigation to move the country towards greater equality after the significant advances of the 1950s and 1960s (Taylor, 2009). Since then, CRT has expanded to draw upon research in fields such as sociology and ethnic studies (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). Some of the key components of CRT in legal studies, as described by Matsuda (1993), include a recognition of the endemic nature of racism in the U.S., highlighting the experiences and knowledge of people of color, a commitment to ending racial oppression, and skepticism about "claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy" (p. 6). In education, CRT has provided a framework for scholars to understand and fight the lack of progress towards integration and the equal access, opportunity, and achievement promised by Brown v. Board of Education (Taylor, 2009). CRT scholarship privileges students of color and focuses on their racialized oppression, subverting the deficit frameworks that are often used to conceptualize their experiences (Smith et al., 2007).

Ontologically, CRT is part of a critical tradition that asserts that there is not one reality but rather multiple realities, each shaped by power imbalances that must be understood in a historical and social context (Ponterotto, 2005). CRT asserts that realities are socially constructed, and that those with the power to represent their experiences and

beliefs widely are able to claim neutrality, to act as though their reality is the single true reality (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This is the philosophical basis for the idea, central to CRT, that naming one's reality, rather than allowing those with power to define reality, is central to emancipation (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995; Fernández, 2002). As described by Dixson and Rousseau (2006), education researchers have focused on giving voice to people of color, thereby shaping reality.

Epistemologically, CRT, like other critical theories, views knowledge as inherently subjective and imbued with values grounded in, rather than separate from, social and historical contexts and identity (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). The basis for knowledge in CRT is experiential. In addition, CRT scholars focus upon race as a central aspect of people's experiences, and therefore of their knowledge, in order to challenge dominant ideologies that make claims to neutrality and colorblindness while casting people of color as peripheral or deficient (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fernández, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). Traditionally, people of color have been represented in social science research by others, without recognition of how power and subjectivity limit those representations (Parker & Lynn, 2009). In education, as Delgado Bernal (2002) noted, students of color are generally not recognized as holders of knowledge. One of the aims of CRT has been to provide a space for people of color to give voice to their experiences and knowledge.

The emphasis on the experiences and knowledge of people of color was central to my study. As Tanaka (1998) wrote, a common justification for multicultural education is that it helps White students become more culturally competent. Instead, my study focused on students of color, their understanding and knowledge, and how multicultural education

affects them. This focus stemmed from my recognition that the truths and realities of students of color are not traditionally recognized in society or in education. In terms of research, CRT scholars are among those who see knowledge as constructed in tandem by the researcher and participants, through their interactions with each other (Morrow & Smith, 2000). By engaging students of color, I entered into a relationship with them through which we constructed realities with the potential to subvert race-based oppression.

The rhetorical structures often employed in CRT reflect the belief that truth and knowledge are socially constructed, and, furthermore, that traditional ways of knowing have been used to oppress people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). In CRT research, rhetorical techniques such as poetry, parables, storytelling, and fiction, techniques that celebrate rather than denigrate subjectivity as a means to truth, are widespread (Taylor, 2009). It is the aim of such techniques to challenge the conventional stories that uphold racial privilege (for example, the story that the U.S. is a meritocratic society; Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Yasso, 2009). CRT rhetorical techniques, in contrast to traditional academic scholarship, often aim to elicit emotion. Creating empathy is one way to challenge conventional wisdom and to create community, especially for the marginalized. My study likewise aimed to create empathy for and understanding of students of color.

The axiology of CRT is explicitly oriented towards emancipation and social justice, as the aim of CRT research is to achieve nothing less than the end of racial oppression, along with other forms of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Like other ideological paradigms, CRT research aims to raise consciousness and to shine light on diverse perspectives (Morrow & Smith, 2000). My study participated in the project to end

racial oppression in two ways. First, through my conversations with students I aimed to raise consciousness and to give voice to those usually unheard. In addition, it is of particular interest to me that multicultural education has been theorized as a tool to combat racial oppression and to ensure equality. By investigating how students of color experience multicultural education, I worked to further our understanding of how education can be a force for either oppression or liberation.

Of particular importance to my study is how CRT and multicultural education relate. As described by Ladson-Billing and Tate (2006), multicultural education, with its roots in multiculturalism, is more in line with liberalism and traditional civil rights law than with the radicalism espoused by CRT. Specifically, Ladson-Billing and Tate criticized multicultural education for making only trivial changes (such as celebrating cultural artifacts), for conflating racial difference with other kinds of difference (such as those related to gender and sexual orientation), and for allowing the status quo to persist by making no underlying changes to society. Indeed, they suggested that multicultural education, like civil rights law, could be distorted to benefit White people at the expense of people of color.

Though I share many of the concerns of Ladson-Billing and Tate (2006), my perspective on multicultural education differs on a number of points. First, I agree that if multicultural education is implemented merely as a superficial celebration of difference, this is indeed antithetical to achieving equality for people of color. One of the aims of my study was to investigate just how multicultural education is being implemented, from the point of view of students of color. On the second point, my stance is more ambivalent – while I recognize the value of expanding the multicultural umbrella beyond racial

difference, I share the concern that this expansion could inadvertently draw attention away from the endemic nature of racism in society, which is one of the reasons I focused in this study on students of color. It is on the last point that I part from Ladson-Billing and Tate's critique of multicultural education. Banks (1994, 1995) argued that transforming society by showing that knowledge and truth are constructed and dependent upon context is the foundation of multicultural education. I believe that this goal is congruent with the principles of CRT. I readily acknowledge that the way multicultural education is currently implemented may be far from Banks' transformative ideal. Indeed, my concern that multicultural education does not represent a departure from the status quo is one of the reasons I believe it is vitally important to understand how students of color are experiencing multicultural education.

Research Design

CRT researchers employ a variety of approaches to carry out their work. For my study, I employed constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2000, 2006). Though CRT is compatible with a number of methodological approaches, I believe that constructivist grounded theory is a particularly good fit with CRT. In describing an approach towards creating a CRT-specific methodology, Delgado Bernal (2002) argued for a focus on experiential knowledge, careful listening, being open, and telling powerful stories. Furthermore, CRT researchers, as described above, work from a tradition of using literary rhetorical devices to render vivid the lived experiences of people of color, evoking emotion, creating empathy, and disrupting the structures that deny people a color a voice. Constructivist grounded theory methodology, as I will describe, is uniquely

compatible with these tenets as well as with the aims of my study.

Grounded theory, which is based in sociological research, is appropriate for the study of areas where a clear theoretical base is not present and for looking at processes involving many elements (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). Grounded theory uses empirical information in order to derive explanations based not in abstraction but in the experiences of individuals, building theory from the bottom-up rather than imposing theory upon observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In traditional grounded theory method, the researcher begins with information gleaned from data collection (generally interviews) and uses codes, diagrams, and conceptual maps to create abstract models of the process in question. In contrast, constructivist grounded theory views the multi-layered coding, abstract model and diagrams, and conceptual maps of traditional grounded theory as devices that encourage detachment and that detract from the depiction of how power plays out in the day to day lives of the participants (Charmaz, 2000; Duncan, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory aims to minimize the distance from the participants' lives by preserving as much of the participant's own language as possible, avoiding the creation of overly abstract models, paying attention to power, and employing literary devices like narrative, imagery, and metaphor to "evoke experiential feeling" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 527). Charmaz noted that constructivist grounded theory is well-suited for use with critical perspectives, in part because it assumes multiple realities and views the researcher's conclusions as necessarily subjective and incomplete. The emphases in constructivist grounded theory on multiple realities, attention to power, rendering lived experience, and literary techniques align powerfully with the aims of CRT.

Constructivist grounded theory shares with traditional grounded theory the overall aim of creating explanations and analyses based in systematic data collection, as well as strategies such as using analyses and purposeful sampling to inform each other, layered coding, and constant comparisons of information and concepts (Charmaz, 2000, 2006).

Researcher as Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary investigative tool (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Many in qualitative and CRT research assert that the subjectivity and positioning of the researcher in a particular historic and social content are essential aspects of any study (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Morrow, 2005). Acknowledging subjectivity allows the researcher to reflect upon the aspects of that subjectivity, influenced by personal background, beliefs, and experiences, that inform the study (Morrow, 2005; Peshkin, 1988). In CRT, reflexivity contributes to recognizing multiple realities (Duncan, 2006). It is important to note that subjectivity, according to this view, is not a problem to be managed, as in much quantitative research, but rather a inextricable part of being a researcher (or, for that matter, a human being; Heshusius, 1994). Instead of aiming for the elusive goal of objectivity, qualitative researchers reflect upon their subjectivity to render their perspectives and biases as transparent as possible to the audience (Morrow, 2005).

In reflecting upon my subjective experiences in relation to this study, I was principally struck by the fact that multiculturalism has played a pivotal role in my life. When deciding among careers, I gravitated towards the field of counseling psychology because of its emphasis on multicultural concerns. I identify primarily as a Korean American. Growing up, as I did, in a city without a substantial Korean or Asian

community, I understood my identity primarily as non-White, defining myself by what I knew I was not. Now, I identify as a person of color, not to diminish the importance of my unique background, and not to essentialize and categorize all people of color together, but in acknowledgment of the endemic importance of race in the U.S. and my belief that people of all races must work together to dismantle the current racial system.

As a graduate student, I have experienced multicultural education both as a student and as an instructor and developer of classes on diversity. As a student, my personal experience with the topic of my study has been wildly varying, with multicultural education classes making up some of the most rewarding and some of the most distressing events of my educational career. These experiences have strengthened my conviction that students of color must demand that multicultural education consider their needs as well as the needs of White students. As an instructor, I have also developed and taught classes on diversity, with the focus on raising awareness of stereotypes and prejudices related to race. My courses have both fit in and worked against the prevailing themes in multicultural education – reducing harmful prejudice is one of the nominal aims of multicultural education, but I consciously avoided a "celebrating differences" approach, based upon my belief that this worthy idea is over-represented in the current educational climate. I am aware that my approach to these courses, which assumed limited prior knowledge of racial oppression, has centered on educating White people. Participating in a workshop on de-centering Whiteness in multicultural social justice work brought this awareness into sharp relief. In part, my study was an attempt to remedy what I now view as a weakness of my past work as an educator, which focused on raising the awareness of White students while I crossed my fingers and hoped that I was doing

students of color in my classes no harm.

As a critical researcher, I must acknowledge that I was in a position of power in relation to participants. In addition to being the researcher, I am older than the participants as well as of higher educational status. In order to equalize power with participants, I began each interview by emphasizing that I viewed them as experts on their own experiences and that I hoped to learn from them. I also attempted to appropriately self-disclose about my own experiences of multicultural education without leading their responses. The dynamic in my relationship with participants may also be affected by the unique position of people of Asian ancestry in the complicated racial system of the United States. Asian Americans have suffered from the model minority myth, in which the purported success of some immigrants from Asia is given as proof that the U.S. is indeed a meritocracy, free from oppressive racism (Chang & Kiang, 2002; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lee, 2009). I am aware that participants may not have automatically viewed me an ally in the fight for racial equality. I endeavored to make my aim of empowering students of color explicit. At the same time, I cannot pretend to understand all forms of racism and racial oppression simply because I am a person of color. In accordance with CRT, however, I employed my subjective experiences of racism as a tool to heighten my sensitivity to issues of race in participant's experiences. As Delgado Bernal (1998) wrote, it is my subjective experiences which have informed my "cultural intuition," or my personal sense of racial oppression which forms the foundation of shared experiences with participants.

Though I began this study with a conscious desire to learn from my participants, I am surprised by the extent to which I have been personally transformed by this study. My

personal philosophy of race when I began the study could best be described as postmodern: I viewed race as socially constructed, problematic, and malleable. Anti-essentialism was my central tenet. Listening to certain participants describe their racial identity, I was struck (one might say thunderstruck) by the beauty and power of what their racial heritage meant to them personally. I had grown accustomed to treating "essence" as a negative, but I have since struggled and continue to struggle with the extent to which I was moved by experiencing race as essential to my very being. At the very minimum, conducting these interviews strengthened my sense of connection to other people of color and my pride in being a member of that community.

Because my subjectivity was an essential aspect of my study, I reflected upon and documented my reactions by writing a self-reflective journal throughout the research process, and I participated in a peer research group that allowed me to further consider my unique position by hearing the perspectives of others (Hill et al., 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000). The peer research team consisted of graduate students conducting qualitative research and met approximately bimonthly. The self-reflective journal, in which I wrote about my own lived experience of the research process, including emotional reactions, provided me with material to understand and incorporate my subjectivity into the analysis (Morrow, 2005). The material from this journal often informed my analysis by helping me attend to salient details, observations, and uncertainties that I would later incorporate into my analysis. This journal is included in a complete audit trail for my study and was verified by my advisor. I also conducted a self-interview, also included in my complete audit trail, in which I responded to the questions I designed for my study, in order to reflect further and more in-depth upon my

experiences and thoughts related to my topic.

Participants

Participants in this study were undergraduate students at the University of Utah who identified as people of color and who lived primarily in the U.S. I attempted to recruit a diverse range of students in relation to race/ethnicity. I also attempted to interview a balance of male and female participants. Participants were not otherwise limited by sexual orientation, age, disability status, or other characteristics (see Tables 1 and 2). Participants had completed the University's diversity course requirement within the last 2 years, most within the past year. Sandelowski (1995) described how qualitative researchers must choose a sample size that is small enough to allow for in-depth analysis yet large enough that the topic under study is adequately represented and described. With these considerations in mind, I interviewed 17 students for this study, as I felt that the relevant content of the interviews had become mostly redundant at that point and new interviews were not adding significantly to my analyses. As Morrow (2005) noted, in qualitative research there is no "magic number" in terms of determining an adequate sample size, as the purpose of conducting multiple interviews is to gather rich information and to approach redundancy.

Context

This study was conducted at the University of Utah, a historically and predominantly White university located in Salt Lake City, Utah. Salt Lake City is home to approximately 180,000 residents, with approximately 80% identifying as White, 4% as Asian, 2% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 2% as Black or African American, 1%

Table 1

Characteristics of Interviewed Participants (N=17)

Characteristic	N	%
Race/Ethnicity[a]		
African American/Black	3	18
American Indian/Native American	4	24
Asian American	3	18
Caucasian (Biracial)	2	12
Latina/o/Hispanic	6	35
Pacific Islander	3	18
Gender		
Female	10	59
Male	7	41
Age at time of interview (years)		
20-23	10	59
24-27	6	35
28-31	1	6
Geographic background		
Arizona	3	18
California	1	6
Georgia	1	6
North Dakota	1	6
Texas	1	6
Utah	10	59

[a]Race/ethnicity counts do not total to N=17 because biracial participants were identified in two separate categories in order to help preserve anonymity.

Table 2

Educational Characteristics of Interviewed Participants (N=17)

Characteristic	N	%
Major		
Biology	1	6
Communication	2	12
Education	1	6
Engineering	2	12
Film	2	12
Gender Studies	1	6
Health	2	12
Literature	1	6
Political Science	2	12
Social Work	3	18
Sociology	2	12
Year in school		
Senior	8	47
Junior	5	29
Sophomore	3	18
Estimated number of diversity classes taken		
1	6	35
2-3	6	35
4+	5	29

as American Indian or Alaska Native and 4% as multiracial, with just under 19% identifying as Hispanic or Latino/a (of any race) as of 2000 (Census, 2000). Salt Lake City's population remains predominately White, but from 2000 to 2003 people of color accounted for 90% of Salt Lake's population growth (Guidos, 2004). Salt Lake City is probably best known as the location of the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), otherwise known as Mormons. As of 2002, just under 50% of people in Salt Lake were estimated to belong to the LDS Church, but it is likely that far fewer are active LDS Church participants ("Olympic briefs," 2002). A public university, the University of Utah serves about 30,000 students, which includes over 6,000 graduate students (Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis, 2008). Most of these students are Utah residents, and 90% commute to campus ("University of Utah Facts," 2009). About 13% of University of Utah undergraduate students identify as people of color: Approximately 6% of students identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 5% as Hispanic or Latino/a, 1% as African American or Black, and under 1% as American Indian or Alaska Native (Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis, 2008).

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Utah and have been a resident of Salt Lake City for about 7 years. As such, I am both an insider and an outsider with regards to my study. As a student of color at the University of Utah, I have shared experiences with many undergraduate students, and I am familiar with the campus culture and climate. On the other hand, as a graduate student, I have not participated in the diversity course requirement, and I am aware that the undergraduate student body has its own unique culture. I believe that my status as insider and outsider afforded me the advantages of both: the familiarity and ease of entry of an insider and the different

perspective and unshared assumptions of an outsider.

Selection Procedures

In line with qualitative research practice, I used purposeful, criterion sampling in my study (Morrow, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005). I initially limited participants to undergraduate students of color who have completed the diversity course requirement within the last year; however, I later extended this time frame to two years in order to recruit from a larger pool of students. Furthermore, I limited participation to those whose diversity course dealt with issues of race, because it is these courses that are specifically theorized to serve students of color. Courses that cover other aspects of diversity were not excluded but must have covered race as a primary topic. In addition, I employed a combination of sampling techniques, including snowball/chain sampling and a degree of maximum variation sample to aim to represent a variety of genders and races/ethnicities in my study. To elaborate, in using snowball/chain sampling I asked participants for referrals to other students who might be able to contribute to the study. In line with maximum variation sampling, I attempted to interview students from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds (see Table 1).

Recruitment

I recruited participants through a variety of channels. I contacted the various student groups from the Center for Ethnic Student Affairs to ask for their assistance in recruiting. As a result, I visited meetings for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MeCHa) and the Intertribal Student Association in person and sent an email to the list-serve for the Black Student Union (see Appendix A for emails). I applied for the use of

the University of Utah Educational Psychology Subject Pool, through which students can participate in research for course credit. I also visited several diversity classes, which I identified through the University of Utah catalog, in person (see Table 2). I introduced myself and the study and asked to meet with interested students once the classes were completed (see Appendix A for recruiting script). When visiting groups or classes, I discussed my study for a few minutes, left my contact information with students, and asked interested students to place their contact information on cards that I supplied and left with the teacher or group leader, with the instructions to place the cards in an envelope (without reading the cards) and return the envelope to me.

I initially did not offer compensation to participants. After I had completed a little over half of my interviews, however, I began compensating study participants with a $10 gift card to either iTunes or Amazon. This change was made in order to encourage more students to participate in my study, specifically because many more female than male students were volunteering for interviews. Participation by male students did increase after implementing compensation. I also contacted prior participants by email to offer compensation so that all participants would have an opportunity to receive a gift card.

Taking Leave/Giving Back

As Morrow and Smith (2000) indicated, participating in a qualitative research project can create an intense bond between participants and researchers. I worked to acknowledge the relationship I shared with the participants in this study and to respect their willingness to engage in a potentially emotionally intense and draining endeavor.

Table 3

Diversity Classes Taken by Participants

Class
African American Experiences
American Indian Experiences
Asian Pacific American Experiences
Asian Pacific American History
Black Feminist Thought
Chicana/o Experience
Diversity & Multiculturalism in Higher Education
Ethnic Minorities in the United States
Exploring Social Inequality Through Music and Film
Indian Law and Policy
Introduction to Ethnic Studies
Introduction to Multicultural Education
La Chicana
LEAP Seminar in Humanities
Native Americans in Modern Society
Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender
Social Diversity and Cultural Understanding

Note. This list is incomplete as many students could not recall the names of all the classes they had taken. Other students named classes that did not correspond to listings in the University of Utah catalog. I made some reasonable suppositions at identifying classes: For example, “Race, Gender and Class” was presumed to be the course Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender.

Per the suggestions of Marshall and Rossman (2006), I asked my participants if they would like to have access to the final report and will follow their wishes. Also per Marshall and Rossman, I handwrote thank you notes to each participant, reflecting on our time together and expressing my appreciation for their participation. Furthermore, I will invite all participants to attend an informal presentation and discussion of my final project, where I will discuss my results and invite participants to share their thoughts and to dialogue. I will provide refreshments at this presentation as another small way to express my gratitude to participants. I will also offer to present my findings to groups on campus, such as the Diversity Committees at the University Counseling Center and the Educational Psychology department, as part of my project to make the voices of students of color heard and in order to give back to the community.

Sources of Data

In order to study the lived experiences of students of color, I employed interviews with students as my primary data source. In qualitative research, one strategy for ensuring the quality of data is to employ more than one data source, triangulating findings instead of relying upon a single data collection method (Morrow, 2005). To create additional avenues for communicating with my participants, I sought feedback from students I had interviewed during the initial phase of data collection. First, I conducted a focus group after completing interviews and my preliminary analyses. The aim of the focus group was to get feedback on my analyses as well as depth of information. I originally planned to conduct additional focus groups. My perception, however, was that students felt inhibited in the focus group because of the presence of other participants. I therefore returned to

one-on-one follow-up interviews. I also received feedback via an online survey website from participants who were unable to meet again in person.

Individual Interviews

In interviews, my primary aim was to center the voices of the participants as much as possible. Towards this end, I used an open-ended, flexible interview structure to allow the participant's own meanings to guide the conversation, using a few open-ended questions to spark discussion (Morrow, 2005). I also followed Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) criteria for interviewing, including attempting to ask questions that elicit long answers and continually checking in with the participants to make sure that I understood their meanings during the interview itself. At the same time, one of the purposes of my interview was to empower students and raise consciousness, in line with critical approaches (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Therefore, I did not hesitate to give feedback on participants' stories by validating their experiences, discussing power imbalances and inequalities as I saw them, and encouraging them to name their own realities, as appropriate.

I approached the interviews with the mindset that the students are the experts in the topic of my study, and that my role in interviewing was to understand their perspective in-depth and to draw out as much of their perspectives and opinions as possible. As a counselor, I employed my clinical skills to build rapport (Morrow & Smith, 2000), and I hope that my respect for the expertise of students helped to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for students to discuss their experiences. My interviews were conversational in nature in order to share power with participants and to encourage

them to structure the interview according to their own interests and views.

Because of the emergent nature of qualitative research, proposed interview questions changed as I conducted interviews and worked on my analysis (see Appendix B for interview protocol; Morrow, 2005). I conducted one-on-one interviews with each participant, lasting between 1 hour and 15 minutes and 2 hours, with most interviews lasting approximately 90 minutes. I audiotaped the interviews in order to create accurate transcripts and took minimal notes during the interview to guide the follow-up questions I asked participants. The primary questions guiding the interview were:

1. Tell me about the class you took for your diversity requirement.
2. What was it like for you to be in this class?
3. What positive experiences did you have in this class? What made these experiences positive for you?
4. What negative experiences did you have in this class? What made these experiences negative for you?
5. What do you think of the diversity requirement?
6. What recommendations would you make to the university or to teachers to improve multicultural education for students of color?

This basic interview structure remained unchanged throughout my study. After initial interviewing and analysis, however, I added some more specific questions to help gather rich information and to prompt participants to discuss what I viewed as potential emergent themes. These questions were:

1. How were diversity classes different for you, compared to other classes?
2. How much did you participate in your diversity classes? What factors

influenced your participation?

3. Do you feel that you play a particular "role" in diversity classes? If so, what led you to take on this role?
4. How have other students of color affected your experience in diversity classes? How about White students?
5. Do you believe White professors can effectively teach a diversity class? Why or why not?
6. What have you learned about being a person of color from your diversity class? What have you learned about White people?
7. How have diversity classes impacted your life or your relationships?
8. What would the worst diversity classes you can imagine be like? How about your ideal diversity class?

In addition, I asked participants to respond to statements adopted from the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) in order to encourage them to consider aspects of their identity in relation to their experiences of multicultural education. The MMRI is a self-report measure that explores four facets of racial identity: salience (the relevance of race to self-concept), centrality (the extent to which race defines self-perception), regard (feelings of positivity towards one's race), and ideology (beliefs about how people should act based upon race). Validity studies have supported using the MMRI with other racial/ethnic groups in addition to African Americans, for whom the measure was originally developed (Cokley & Helm, 2001; Johnson, Kurpius, Rayle, Arredondo, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005). I originally asked participants to read over

the entire measure and to discuss items with me that they found compelling. Based upon responses from my first eight participants, I created a list consisting of the items that had generated the most discussion and presented this to the rest of the participants during our interviews (see Appendix B). Using the MMRI items as starting points for discussion allowed me to gain rich information about how multicultural education impacted identity for students of color.

Focus Groups, Follow-up Interviews, and Online Survey

Focus groups, follow-up interviews, and the online survey served multiple purposes in my study. Through these avenues, I was able to ask follow-up questions to participants, to make sure I represented participant meanings to their satisfaction, and to get feedback and suggestions on my analyses (Morrow, 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000). Giving feedback was optional for participants. I first conducted a focus group of three students, formed based on convenience (who could meet when). I met with the group once for about two hours, in order to allow enough time for in-depth discussion and feedback from all group members. I presented my preliminary analysis to the focus group, then asked for their feedback and suggestions on each item, making sure to state that I wanted to hear points of disagreement as well as support (see Appendix C for the handout presented to focus group participants). I videotaped the focus group to assist in accurate transcription and to preserve the non-verbal interactions of the group.

I used the same format in individual follow-up interviews, presenting participants with my preliminary analysis and asking for feedback. Follow-up interviews were audio-taped. For the online survey, I asked participants to mark whether they agreed or

disagreed with each item in my preliminary analysis and to explain their choices (see Appendix C).

Finally, I asked all students who participated in feedback, whether through the focus group, follow-up interviews, or the online survey, to reflect upon their experience of being a study participant. Students were positive about their participation. Many stated they appreciated feeling that their opinions and experiences were valued. A few noted that they had been wary upon beginning the interview because they were unsure of my "agenda" and that it took them time to trust that I wanted to hear their experiences. Many looked forward to seeing the study results because of their curiosity about others' experiences. Three students participated in the focus group, four in individual follow-up interviews, and four in the online survey. Overall, 11 out of 17 participants provided feedback on my analyses.

Data Analysis and Writing

The first step after I completed the first interview was to begin the process of transcription. I employed a transcription service which was vetted in regards to their handling of confidentiality and general conscientiousness for this purpose. I listened to each interview while reading the transcription in order to check for accuracy, as well as to help immerse myself in the data. Though not ideal, this process allowed me to spend more time on analysis than if I had transcribed the interviews myself. I also used the program NVivo, which has been specifically designed for use in qualitative research, to aid in analysis. No computer program can substitute for familiarity with the data, but the notation and search functions helped to ensure accuracy in organizing and sorting through the material (Q.I.P Ltd., 2008; Weitzman, 2000).

Analysis of data in grounded theory occurs alongside the data collection process. I coded the interviews line-by-line as I gathered data, with the codes emerging from the data themselves rather than predetermined (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). This process is termed open coding. As I conducted this initial coding, I engaged in the constant comparison process, comparing people, events, categories, and points in time to one another in order to analyze the data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In the second stage of analysis (which occurred concurrently with the first stage), I used focused/selective coding to pick out frequent codes and to organize the data, while writing memos that delve into the meanings underneath the codes (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Strauss, 1987). As outlined by Charmaz (2006), I did not employ axial coding, or coding that describes categories in relation to each other and along axes, in order to keep my analysis fluid and simple. Along the same lines, I also avoided theoretical coding, or relating codes to each other in a theoretical framework. As my analysis emerged through this process, I added to my interview questions, as described, in order to look for disconfirming evidence and feeding data back into the analysis, until I reached a point of saturation where I did not believe that additional data would contribute further to the analysis (see Appendix B for interview protocol).

It is important to note that there is no "true" saturation, in the sense that no analyses can capture the full complexity of human experience (Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 1995). The point at which saturation occurred was merely the point at which I determined that further investigation would no longer add to my subjective, necessarily incomplete, analysis. As constructivist grounded theory emphasizes, the analysis merely claims to describe "a reality" rather than one true reality (Charmaz, 2000). In accordance with this

theory, my analysis did not stray far from the stories and meaning as told by the participants themselves. Instead, I strived for a deep understanding of their experiences, describing those experiences without jargon and through use of literary language along with active codes that strived to evoke meaning rather than truth.

These deep understandings arose as a result of immersion in the data. As Morrow (2005) described, "repeated forays into the data" (p. 256), including continual reviewing of materials such as tapes and transcripts, is necessary to gain enough familiarity with the data and to make meaningful connections. Towards this end, I worked daily to delve into the data so that I could process them in all their nuances and subtleties. One aid in this process was the writing of analytic memos, which are "a collection of hunches, interpretations, queries and notes made by the researcher . . . that become part of the data corpus and are reviewed frequently for incorporation into the analysis" (p. 256; see Appendix D for a sample memo). Because my subjectivity also formed a vital part of analysis, I did not attempt to separate my reflections from these memos and combined the writing of these memos into my self-reflective journal.

The journal of my self-reflections and memos provided the seeds that became the foundation for my analysis of the data. For example, my self-reflections led me to recognize how often participants discussed how classrooms could be comfortable or uncomfortable spaces. This provided the kernel for my memo about the difficulty of speaking openly in diversity classes, which led me to ask participants specifically about decisions surrounding class participation. This eventually led me to a central piece of my analysis, which deals with the importance of speaking in multicultural education.

In the end, I produced a theoretical model of how students of color at the

University of Utah experience multicultural education, a model which is firmly grounded in the words of the students and the meanings and interpretations that students make. Because an important part of this model is an understanding of the lived experience of these students, I used literary elements such as metaphor, analogy, narrative, and concrete descriptions to evoke mood and emotions and to breathe life into the categories and theoretical links I described.

Trustworthiness

In CRT, research is judged not by standard such as generalizability or objectivity, but by how much it contributes to the project of emancipation and the end of oppression, sometimes described as consequential or social justice validity (Parker & Lynn, 2009; Patton, 2002). I gauge my study's success by how well I represented those who are usually silenced and if I identified inequalities in power that require remediation (Patton, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1989) proposed a set of criteria, termed authenticity criteria, for use in constructivist research. As Morrow noted (2005), some of these criteria are particularly appropriate for use with critical paradigms, such as educative authenticity, which calls for research to expand the understandings of the participants, and catalytic authenticity, which stipulates that research should result in some kind of action or change. Catalytic authenticity dovetails nicely with consequential validity (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2002). Thus, my study aimed to raise consciousness on the part of the participants and to facilitate the improvement and reform of multicultural education (Morrow, 2005).

In order to ensure rigor in my study, I wrote a self-reflective journal and

immersed myself in the data, as I have previously described. I created both a complete and condensed audit trail of all my research activities. The purpose of the audit trail was to chronicle all the activities of research and to make the process as transparent as possible to observers (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morrow & Smith, 2000). My complete audit trail consists of my journal, including self-reflections and memos; transcripts; and other documents used in the process of research. These I stored in my office and made available for my advisor to audit. I also created a condensed audit trail in which I detailed a timeline of my research activities, documenting what I did on a day-to-day basis (see Appendix D).

Particular Ethical Considerations

As a psychologist in training, I was bound by the ethical standards outlined by the American Psychologist Association (2002) in the conduct of this research. In addition, I received the approval of the University of Utah Institutional Review Board (IRB) and followed the procedures accepted by the IRB in conducting my research.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, particular ethical duties deserve special attention. As noted by Haverkamp (2005), protecting participants' confidentiality can be especially difficult in qualitative research. Changing details such as client demographic information and details about their lives and identities may be antithetical to the purpose of some qualitative research, which seeks to portray the importance and meaning of biographical information. This was certainly the case in my study, where changing participants' race and ethnicity could dramatically alter meanings and analyses. In addition, when participants are members of minority groups, as was the case in my study,

there is increased likelihood that they can be identified when details about their lives are presented.

I used a focus group for my study, which raised further issues of confidentiality. As a researcher, it is my responsibility to maintain confidentially to the extent ethically possible, but I could not control the actions of participants in focus groups who were privy to personal and sensitive information about each other. I was also aware that others had access to information about participants, including my advisor, my research team, and my transcriptionist.

Addressing these confidentiality concerns required that, throughout the study, I remained highly conscientious about informed consent and educating participants about what it means to participate in research. Before interviewing participants, I explained to them the limits of confidentiality, including discussing how I receive help with transcription and that I consult with other people in the course of research and analysis (Haverkamp, 2005). I explained the particular confidentiality concerns of this study with my transcriber and research team members and did not use names to talk with team members and my advisor about participants. I was explicit about the ways in which what participants tell me may be used, as I described how I masked identities to the best of my ability by changing names and omitting identifying data to the extent possible. I also explicitly noted that participants, at any time during this study, could change their minds about what information I included in my research. I addressed confidentiality not only at the beginning of my time with participants but also throughout our work together, in order to maintain an ongoing conversation about how much participants are willing to

share. Participants had the final say in how much they revealed and in how much I wrote about what they revealed.

As noted, the issue of confidentiality was complicated in my study by the use of a focus group. I made clear at the beginning of the focus group that information revealed in the group should remain strictly confidential, explaining that focus group participants should feel free to discuss their own reactions and feelings in the group to people external to the group to the extent that their discussion did not reveal information about others within the group. I revisited this topic at the end of the focus group.

Furthermore, I explained to all participants that confidentiality would be broken in certain cases, such as if someone had revealed information about ongoing abuse of children, disabled or elderly persons, or others who are unable to protect themselves, or in order to protect participants or others against imminent physical threats of harm. None of these scenarios arose during the course of the interviews or focus groups, so I did not break participant confidentiality in this study.

In qualitative research, researchers must be mindful of the likelihood that participants will experience emotional distress as a result of talking about sensitive topics (Haverkamp, 2005). During my study, I asked participants to discuss highly sensitive topics, such as racism, which resulted in at least some participants experiencing difficult and negative emotions during the course of the interview. Though it is my hope that discussing these topics ultimately proved empowering to participants, I remained alert to the seriousness of the participants' emotional distress. Part of my responsibility as a researcher who also works as a counselor was to keep the focus of my interviews on the research topic rather than on therapeutic work for the participants (Duncombe & Jessop,

2002; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I remained mindful that many therapeutic interventions, such as those designed to deepen emotions, were not appropriate for this study. Instead, my responsibility as a researcher was to discuss with participants the possibility that they may experience difficult emotions, and to help them formulate the means to deal with those emotions. For example, I used my clinical skills by checking in with participants to determine if they were emotionally intact, both at the end and throughout the interview as appropriate (Gottlieb & Lasser, 2001). All participants received information about places where they can further receive support, such as the University Counseling Center, the Women's Resource Center, the Lesbian/ Gay/ Bisexual Transgender Resource Center, and the Center for Ethnic Student Affairs.

In the location of this study people of color are a minority group. The relatively small size of the community of people of color means that it is more probable than usual that I might have a dual relationship at some point in the future with one or more participants in this study. In order to deal with this possibility, I made clear that confidentiality will persist even after the study has completed. Specifically, I informed participants that if I meet them after the study, I will not spontaneously refer to the study or their participation, allowing them to decide how much information they want to divulge. I also discussed with participants beforehand the possibility that we might encounter each other after the study, asking participants how they feel about this prospect and if they have any concerns.

One of my participants asked if I would like to spend time with her afterwards as a friend. I consulted with my advisor and my research group and determined that this would not necessarily be a harmful dual relationship as she had completed her

participation in my study. I was, however, mindful that we would begin a potential friendship with a power imbalance because of the extent to which she had self-disclosed to me already, and I planned to address this with her. The participant, however, changed her mind and decided not to meet, and I supported her decision.

I view informed consent as the foundation of ethical behavior in research. As noted, I was explicit in my explanation of issues of confidentiality, the possibility of emotional distress, and dual relationships with participants. I continued discussion of these concerns throughout the study, so that informed consent was an ongoing process rather than as a single event (Smythe & Murray, 2000). Finally, keeping in mind the inherent power differential between researchers and participants, I was clear that participants are free to change their minds about any aspect of their participation in the study as long as it is ongoing.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This study asked: How do undergraduate students of color at a predominantly White university experience multicultural education? To explore this question, I asked students of color to describe what diversity classes have been like for them, particularly in relation to their education as a whole. I asked them to consider what made their experiences of multicultural education positive or negative. I asked for their support, criticisms, or suggestions for improvement for multicultural classes. As I will describe, students responded in many ways, by telling me not only about their classes but about their lives, their identities, their families, their friends, their fears, their goals, and their hopes.

I begin telling their stories by describing how students felt about speaking about race. This provides the basis for understanding how students experienced diversity in non-multicultural classes and what differentiates positive and negative multicultural experiences. I discuss how students view multicultural knowledge and how this affects what students want from the multicultural classroom. Finally, I describe how students view the idea of multicultural education as a whole.

Speaking the Unspoken

When students of color step into a multicultural class, they bring the weight of their personal histories with them. For most students, these histories have been significantly shaped by their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Race and ethnicity have informed and complicated their identities, their relationships, their ambitions, their hopes and fears, and how they perceive themselves as fitting into the fabric of American society. Yet, very few college students have had the opportunity to participate in frank discussions about race. Instead, they have been implicitly asked to remain silent by omission: omission of discussion and education that addresses race and race-related concerns. They have become largely accustomed to living in silence in a society that seems to ignore or trivialize their lived experiences. They may have themselves learned to ignore how their race and ethnicity affects their lives. As Tiffany, an African American woman, described, race is "the elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about, but it's just right there, and people are walking around, looking under, trying to go beneath. . . . That's the one subject that people shy away from. Nobody wants to talk about it."[3] Cordelia, a Chicana, said, "It's like everybody brushes [race] under the table like it doesn't exist anymore." Rosie, a biracial woman who primarily identified as Native American, noted, "Really, who gets together and talks about [race]? Nobody." She explained, "You don't want to talk about it because of the massive waves that are being caused anywhere. You always have to watch what you say."

Students specifically criticized the lack of attention to race in the classroom. Hector, a Hispanic man, described the story of people of color as "dark history that

[3] Some extraneous words, such as "like" and "you know," that do not alter meaning were deleted from participant quotes to increase readability.

nobody likes to put a light on." Zoe, a biracial woman who primarily identified as African American, complained, "In the history classes, it was like, oh, this happened, Revolutionary War, Civil War, these different wars, and now magically we're here and look how great this country is." Rosie stated, "The most disheartening thing to me about my education in general is that history in the books is not history in reality. . . . We're just uncomfortable about it and it's sad. It's very sad." Cordelia noted, "In classes it seems that students did not want to offend anyone or say the wrong thing. So instead of talking of race they would sit in class not saying anything." Arturo, a Latino, described his education before college:

> It tends to whitewash everyone and everything that you learn, so you're indoctrinated with this sense of we're all the same, we're all the same, everybody is going to be treated equally, and we're not going to make any cultural and race or ethnically appropriate material, it's all going to be the same, a.k.a. it's all going to be White.

A number of students complained that when they tried to bring up race-related concerns in class, these concerns were dismissed. Cordelia stated, "The professors make you feel like crap. . . . When you try to express yourself, they're like, 'Uh huh,' and stare away from you, so then you just learn to get your work done and get out of class." Grace, an Asian American woman, described how she yearned for more engagement on issues of race: "I decided we would write on the importance of hip-hop in American culture and you could just tell that [the professor] did not know what to do. . . . I was like, wow, you weren't critical of this at all, you were so scared of being maybe perceived as a racist." Arturo stated, "I've had so many experiences where I've tried to respond to something that I think is racist and people say, 'That's not racist. Shut up.'" Others do not even try to voice concerns related to race in anticipation of rejection. Lucy, a Pacific Islander

woman, in describing her training to become an orientation leader, stated, “Sometimes I want to say, [issues related to transition to college] are not just these mechanical things. It also can relate to race and diversity, but I don’t feel like I can bring that up.” She explained, “[The instructors] would say, ‘We don’t have the time.’ That’s what they’d say. ‘We don’t have the time to discuss this.’”

For many students, their inability to find a space in which to discuss race leaves them feeling isolated and alone. As Rosie noted, “Sometimes I’ve left different classes or different scenarios in my life and I’ve thought, ‘Am I the only one that is like this?’ It’s awful.” Other students described their realization that they had erased their own ethnic identities as a result of growing up in a predominantly White culture. Arturo noted, “A large part of my adolescent life I tried to, like, whitewash myself.” He continued, “I adopted this different manner of speaking . . . the way I dress, the music I listen to, I just wanted to fit in.” Hector was appalled at the extent to which he had internalized negative views of himself, stating, “I see a lot of other Hispanics here at the University of Utah, and sometimes I find myself thinking, how did you even make it into the U and are you even going to graduate?” He realized, “That is so crazy, especially when I think it. What am I doing?”

In order to understand how students of color experience multicultural education, I have found it imperative to first comprehend the strangeness of the lives that students have led before they enter a multicultural classroom. In a culture of instant and continuous communication, most students of color have never had the opportunity to communicate in a meaningful way about an aspect of their identities that underpins a significant portion of their lives. Instead, many have implicitly been asked to ignore race,

sometimes being punished when they attempt to initiate a conversation on the topic or to express race-related concerns.

The Shortest Month of the Year: Experiencing Non-Multicultural Classes

The difficulty of speaking about race is reflected in the curricula students have encountered in their schools. Outside of explicitly multicultural classes, the exposure that most students of color have had to formal education concerning their racial or ethnic group is extremely limited. As Cordelia wryly noted of Black History Month, "It's the shortest month of the year." Sadly, this limited exposure was also overwhelmingly negative. Though this study focuses specifically on multicultural and diversity classes, understanding what students of color experience in other classes elucidates both how multicultural classes are unique and how past experiences have shaped how students approach multicultural issues in the classroom.

For most students, sitting in a classroom meant sitting with a constant threat of some kind of negative race-related experience. Even in classrooms in which race is not the primary topic, other students or professors could, at any moment, reveal prejudices and perpetuate stereotypes that students of color experienced as hurtful. For example, William noted that professors relied on trite stereotypes in trying to relate to him: "They try to talk Native. They'll say, 'Oh, Mother Earth and Father Sky,' things like that and I'm just like, you're crazy, man!" Cordelia described how a professor's use of a stereotype diminished her credibility in a religion class: "When [the professor] was talking about altars in Mexican-Americans' homes, and she's like, 'And they're very colorful, like their clothing.' And it's like, not all of those wear that."

Some students felt overlooked in classrooms in general. When issues related to their racial or ethnic group arose, however, students often reported receiving attention based on assumptions of expertise, or expectations that the student serve as a spokesperson or self-disclose in order to educate others. For example, Zoe described, "In a history class, and you talk about slavery, and I'm the only Black person in the class. I could feel people looking at me because it's like, how is she going to react to this? Is she going to start crying because that's her ancestors?" William noted that one of his professors once asked, "'Since you're an Indian, what's your perspective on this?' Saying, 'Now you speak for all Indians.'" Tiffany described the increased attention this way:

> Rap music, any time a subject like that comes up and I'm the only Black person in class, I'm like, oh my gosh, and I sometimes think I've got a few eyeballs looking this way because, when you've dealt with what you've dealt with, you know what people are thinking. You see the stares, you see people looking. . . . Sometimes I'm like, oh Lord, here we go!

In addition to stereotypes and unwanted attention based on their race, some students described encountering more obviously negative messages about their race and ethnicity. Brianna, an African American woman, described a class in which "[the professor] has these slides about monkeys, or they'll show slides with all these Black children, all the slides are Black children in poverty. There are no positive pictures." Ethan, an American Indian man, described a discussion in a creative writing class about a piece (written by a White woman) which featured a Navajo character. "Someone had suggested [the Navajo character] wasn't savage enough. . . . Someone suggested maybe giving him poison darts to make him more savage." Sandra noted in her political science courses, "There's always that fear that the people of color are going to take over." She

remembered, during a class on politics, "I actually started crying in one of the classes and I had to get out because I couldn't deal with someone saying [undocumented workers] are just breaking the law, they're criminals." Sandra noted that the professor did not respond to the student's comment. "He would say it with such hatred that I wonder why the professor didn't really say anything. . . . I felt like truly I was invisible in that class."

Almost uniformly, students reported negative experiences when multicultural issues arose in classes that do not have an explicit multicultural focus. Arturo described a relatively neutral incident in a health course: "There was a section where we framed things in terms of race and ethnicity, in terms of population, population health, and I think that teacher, he was super apprehensive, and he even told us, 'I hate teaching this part of this class.'" Though Arturo wished the instructor would educate himself on health issues as related to race and ethnicity, he appreciated that the instructor was at least honest about his lack of expertise. This frank acknowledgement of discomfort and ignorance about multicultural issues was a rarity. More commonly, students of color viewed most professors and White students as not only uninformed but unaware of their lack of knowledge. It's as though race is not only the elephant in the room, but an elephant that is visible to only some people.

I Wanted Something Good: Desiring Multicultural Classes

For many students, the lack of dialogue about race fueled a desire for multicultural and diversity education. As Cordelia described, she was the only person she knew who didn't feel proud of her history. "Everywhere where I'd go, it was dirty

Mexican, or Mexican this or Mexican that, so I always had a negative image of myself and where my family came from." She continued,

> I wanted something that was good about myself, rather than all the negatives and everybody telling me, every book, everything you ever read in junior high and high school, that you were bad and you were dirty and you never made any contribution to the U.S. and this isn't your country.

In seeking a diversity class, Cordelia deliberately sought to change her self-image. Others realized the importance of learning more about diversity issues because of their career plans, which included teaching, social work, and creative work.

Though several students stated that they took a diversity course to fulfill the university requirement, they chose which course to take based on their desire to learn more about their specific racial and ethnic background. Significantly, students specifically wanted to be more informed in order to engage in conversations. For instance, Daniel, a Latino, noted, "When I'm stuck into a conversation about my background, I really wanted to be prepared to talk about it." Daniel particularly wanted to learn how to refute negative statements about immigrants. Along similar lines, Ethan wanted to "unpack the history of myself and I guess the school," after an incident involving the use of caricatures of American Indians at a sporting event, in order to prevent such incidents from occurring again in the future. Rosie was drawn to the possibility of discussing race in an academic setting: "[Diversity issues] are really sensitive issues, to me, anyways, and I thought it would be interesting to have an academic approach." These students' motivations for taking a diversity class reflect their desire to fill in what they recognize are gaps in their knowledge, especially when it to comes to knowing how to converse about race and ethnicity.

Experiencing Multicultural Education

Because of their negative experiences and their desire for multicultural education, the stakes are high for students stepping into a multicultural course on the first day of class. They are accustomed to living in a society in which open conversations about race are verboten, and to education that generally ignores their racial group or relies upon stereotypes. They are used to having their concerns about race dismissed or, conversely, to facing inappropriate expectations that they should be experts and educate others because of their racial background. Many sought specific courses in order to learn more about their own racial history, hoping to learn how to speak productively about race and to learn to be proud of themselves and their heritage.

In the multicultural classroom, students' experiences covered a spectrum ranging from disastrous to transformative. They emerged hopeful, cynical, determined, frustrated, indifferent, angry, forgiving, patriotic, energized, lonely, reflective, or a combination of these. I begin by describing how students have learned to manage themselves around multicultural issues, which involves surveying negative experiences and students' reactions to those experiences, specifically how students have learned to manage themselves in relation to multicultural education. I touch briefly on the relatively rare neutral multicultural course experience, and embark upon a description and analysis of the holy grail of multicultural education: the positive multicultural classes that enlighten and empower students of color, creating a space for them to speak the unspoken.

More of the Same: Negative Multicultural Experiences

In negative multicultural classes, students experienced a repetition of what they had encountered in other classes in relation to race and ethnicity. For example, heightened attention was not uncommon. Hector noted that when a professor mentioned racial epithets in class, students looked at Hector as though thinking, "Oh my gosh, is that appropriate? Can you say that?" Kevin, an Asian American man, said he was occasionally singled out by his professor to share his opinion on Asian American issues.

Students of color continued to be confronted with negative stereotypes in multicultural classes. Cordelia recounted a class in which "everybody kept saying, 'Well, if a Black man's following me, I'm going to be more scared than [if it were] a White man in a business suit.'" Lucy discussed a class exercise in which students were asked to list stereotypes about people of color: "I'm like, wow! And then I felt, not attacked, I wouldn't say that much, but just, wow. Because I'm the only student of color in there and you're saying, 'Dumb, lazy.'" Arturo noted that one instructor perpetuated the "noble savage" stereotype when discussing American Indians. Ethan recounted how students inappropriately grouped photos from different American Indian tribes together in a presentation.

Though one of the aims of multicultural education is to combat racial stereotypes, some students found that the classes confirmed stereotypes instead. Melissa, a biracial woman, described an assignment in which students were required to visit a reservation in order to investigate stereotypes about American Indians. She reported, "They got up to give their presentation and basically stated that the stereotypes had been true." Melissa also described her discomfort with a class that required service learning with

communities of color. As she stated, “It seemed like we were studying definitions of the other, and the other being people of color, and then we had to go help them.” Melissa worried that this requirement merely cemented the stereotype that people of color require assistance. Though Melissa was in favor of service learning in general, for a class on multicultural concerns, she stated, “I don’t feel it was a good fit.”

Students of color often felt astonished at the naiveté of their White peers. Tiffany described her White peers as “fresh out of the womb. They don’t have any idea.” William noted of his White classmates, “They’re kind of close-minded or sheltered. Well, I wouldn’t say close-minded, but sheltered. . . . It seems like they’ve never been, like, outside.” The following conversation with Ethan about the discussion following a documentary on alcoholism on a reservation illustrates how even well-intentioned White students revealed their ignorance in multicultural classes:

> Ethan: It was interesting, because that [class] had quite a few White people in it, and to see them try and fix it, it was just interesting to see.
> *What was interesting about that?*
> Ethan: Just that there were genuine, earnest, really backward responses.
> *Like what?*
> Ethan: Well, why don’t they move them all to another tribe so that that doesn’t happen? Or a different reservation where that doesn’t happen?
> *Like they’re just all interchangeable.*
> Ethan: Right. The very thoughts that maybe got them there to begin with.

Students who spoke up about their experiences of racism often felt attacked in response. Melissa said, “I’m vulnerable when I share personal experiences, and I feel like any retaliation becomes an attack and that I don’t have anything valid to say.” White students often attempted to explain or justify instances of racism. Cordelia described telling a story about how she was asked for a driver’s privilege card instead of a driver’s license. She said other students told her, “‘Well then, you must’ve looked a certain way.’

. . . They're shifting the blame back onto me." This type of reaction was common enough that Grace, for example, simply said, "I perceive most classrooms as hostile spaces."

A number of students noted that discussions on affirmative action in particular left them feeling misunderstood and marginalized. Brianna, in response to a student's comment that people should not get special treatment, thought, "Well, you have to understand, you have privilege. . . . You don't know the struggle so far as being a minority, especially an African American, the disadvantages that we've had." Jason, a Native American man, characterized the discussion of affirmative action in his class as "pretty rough." He said, "I honestly think that people have the totally wrong idea of it. I think people look at minorities like, oh, they're here because they're a minority. But really, you're here because you got good grades in high school."

In encountering heightened attention, stereotypes, naiveté, and invalidation of their experiences, students of color found in some multicultural classes simply a repetition of what they had experienced in other classes. In taking multicultural classes, students of color also had an opportunity for increased observation of how White students responded to material that addressed non-White groups. In many cases, students of color found White students indifferent or even disdainful. William noted of his White peers, "They wouldn't want to listen to me. . . . I wasn't as valued." William was disappointed after he made a presentation in class about his own background, saying "Some of [the students] just, I don't know what it was, they had no appreciation, even though they brought their own things and I would never, I hope I would never, not appreciate them." He noted that White students said of the class, "I really don't care about this class. This is just stupid what we're learning." Grace overheard White students discussing a diversity

class: “They were talking about how it’s not important and how they don’t care and how they just want to get As. They were saying really racist things, and I was sitting right there, and I was just like, do you think I don’t speak English?” Kevin overheard a White student saying that his diversity class “was just designed to pick on White students.”

Unfortunately, many students of color learned that simply taking a class focused on multicultural and diversity concerns was no guarantee that their negative experiences of race in education would not simply be repeated. Most often these negative experiences centered on the reactions of White students, though instructors and class assignments also played a role in perpetuating stereotypes.

It’s Just Survival: Managing Multicultural Education

A bleak picture emerged of how students of color experience race in most of their education. As in society at large, race is largely ignored, but when it is discussed, it is in ways that students often find demeaning, dismissive, or hurtful. Given this context, students of color, perhaps especially those who have persevered at PWIs, have developed a variety of strategies for dealing with race. Many students described expending significant amounts of time and energy preparing for conversations about race, particularly in deciding when and how to participate. This expenditure was a necessary cost of taking classes on diversity and multicultural issues. Melissa said of managing herself in multicultural classes, “It’s just survival. I can’t spend too much energy on worrying about me and how other people see me if I’m going to try to pass the class.”

Often, students feared the vulnerability that results from speaking out about race. “I’m more afraid of saying, well, this happened or that happened,” stated Cordelia,

"because it seems like the entire class is going to attack me." Grace wanted to express her disagreement with classmates on a race-related issue, but held back because "I was really scared to challenge that in the class because I was like, crap, nobody's going to agree with me and that's going to put me in a really vulnerable position." Sandra noted that she had become accustomed to living with "a fear that I would have . . . [of] someone attacking me and then I would just start crying right there or I would get angry. . . . I usually don't speak up because I'm fearful." Sandra explained, "I just don't feel that physical safety. It's not just the emotional or the intellectual safety, but it's also the physical that they're going to come after me and do something to me."

For some students, the expectation of negative reactions carried the rawness of a wound. Others felt inured. As Hector noted, "It's something that I've been growing up with my entire life, so I'm pretty desensitized to it." He stated that he would occasionally feel embarrassed by other students' remarks about race, but said this was rare because "it's something that I'm just so used to." For Jason, expecting negative comments from other students acted as a defense:

> Honestly, I would get irritated, but it's nothing that I didn't expect to hear, because anything that someone would say that would bother me, I was like, well, before they even said it, I'd be like, someone's going to say this before the class is over. Because in your dealings with people, you just know what certain people will think or say. . . . You anticipated it and you were just waiting for someone to actually say it, which is not so bad.

Almost all students, with a few notable exceptions, engaged in a time-consuming and sometimes exhausting process of managing themselves in relation to discussions about race. This process commonly involved gauging the atmosphere of the classroom, sizing up the professor and classmates, anticipating reactions, assessing the possible benefits of speaking up, and formulating an approach. As Grace described:

> I don't know how else to navigate [classrooms] unless I have a high awareness of where I am in relation to other people, not just physically, but academically and to the professor. I really have to feel out a classroom before I can safely decide how to engage myself in it. I never don't do that.

Grace elaborated: "Whenever I think about countering a point in class, I have to think, well, what are they going to say in response?" William remarked upon the costs associated with managing a multicultural conversation: "There's a ton of stress in there. You could just feel it within yourself, but when you hear other people talking, you just feel it and sense it. . . . Yeah, there's stress. And it's extreme to really extreme." Melissa described the need to determine how much of herself she was willing to put into a conversation about race: "I was careful of the energy I was expending."

Given the energy that many students expend in making decisions about how to participate to discussions on race, it is no surprise that many described exhaustion consistent with racial battle fatigue. Of correcting mistakes, Ethan noted, "It was just draining to really have to do that." He remarked, "It's just one incident and you think it's no big deal, but then you're like whoa, that's the fifth time that's happened." Of conversations about race and ethnicity, Melissa stated, "I just got tired of it. There's only a finite amount of energy that I have to deal with stuff like that." Cordelia remarked, "When nobody's listening or paying attention or it seems like I'm rambling and nobody's really there, then I get tired of it." William said, "All of these little things accumulate and they build up. That's why a lot of the times people are so bitter."

Some students were drained by negative interactions even when they were not personally involved. Grace noted, "I've left classes extremely angry at the fact that I've spent an entire semester being closed because I didn't have the ability or the energy to attack all these things that I felt I was being attacked for, even though it wasn't

necessarily personally at me." Melissa remarked, "I always feel like even if someone doesn't personally attack me, they say something that attacks maybe another student of color, I still feel that pain."

Though both male and female students described the need to manage themselves in relation to discussions on race and diversity, a couple of students believed that women of color faced a higher degree of scrutiny and peril in diversity classes. Cordelia noted, "Especially poli-sci, you've got a lot of men in your classes, it's not so much women, so okay, I'm a double minority here. I'm a woman and I'm a minority, so I don't need a million men screaming at me, shouting that what I experienced isn't right." William related of his female friends,

> They're always stressing out about [how] they feel they ventured and said whatever they wanted until someone . . . said something that was really not nice, just demeaned them, so they're scared to talk out in class. . . . They use the term, "They're trying to put me in place." . . . Just hearing their stories it was like, dang.

Avoiding Negative Reactions

Many different factors went into students' decisions about when to speak out. For example, Ethan remained silent after a particular offensive remark was made because "I felt enough people got the ignorance that I didn't really need to call it out." Ethan also factored in his own expertise, sometimes wanting to speak up but worried about lacking credibility and authority. Melissa described treading lightly when deciding whether to speak about multicultural issues. She worried, "I have to be careful, because of what I know and what I experience, to know that some people just don't know." Cordelia also described the importance of judging other students in the class in determining when it was safe to speak up. She noted that if people were "set in their ways" she would remain

silent, "but if somebody's like, 'Really, that happened to you? It still happens?' Then it's like, yeah, and this is what happened."

For many students, the primary focus of their assessments was avoiding attacks from other students. Melissa noted, "I never really worried that I'd say anything wrong, just something that would cause an uproar in the class where you say something and then ten hands go up." She said, "I have to be careful that I don't share personal experiences so I don't get personally attacked." Sandra recalled how past experiences led to her feel wary:

> First, I like to hear what everyone else has to say, especially if . . . I'm the only person of color in there. That's usually how I approach it, because I've been attacked verbally, so I think I was traumatized because you just can't help it. You're just afraid that's going to come again.

Cordelia noted she will gauge when to stop speaking based upon the reaction to her: "This guy was getting very hostile towards me, he was rolling his eyes and saying, 'Well, you don't really know,' so when I get into an environment like that . . . then I'll back off."

Often, students refrained from speaking due to fears about how they would be perceived. Some worried about speaking too much or appearing contrary. Arturo, for example, said, "I don't like to sound like a know-it-all." Jason recalled hearing misperceptions of life on a Native American reservation: "A lot of times, I could contradict it, but I didn't want to be like the stand-out kid that had to put the opposite opinion all the time." Others were aware of the danger of being labeled specifically for being a person of color who expresses anger about race-related issues. Grace said, "You don't get anywhere if everyone just looks at you like, 'You're that angry person of color, and you need to shut up.'" "The angry person of color" emerged as a role many students

knew. Melissa even expressed her relief that in one class that she did not occupy that role, explaining, “It wasn’t necessarily that I was being the loud, angry person because [another student] had already taken that role because she was very vocal.”

Checking Out

Several students admitted that their solution to the conundrum of how to participate in diversity classes was not to participate. They checked out. They shut down. They may have stopped going to classes, or may have decided to sit silently in class. As William noted, “Sometimes you get shut down and you just don’t want to get embarrassed again, so you hold back.” Students most commonly shut down as the result of feeling attacked or negated. As Grace noted, after a discussion in which her viewpoint was not acknowledged, “a part of me shut off, and I was like, I will write my papers how I want to write them, but I’m not going to contribute to this classroom.” Grace felt saddened, “[It] kind of sucks, because I want to say what I want to say. . . . It’s really conflicting.” Though this decision may appear to be a surrender, students who shut down acted to protect themselves in one of the few ways that was available to them. For some students, shutting down may be a form of resistance against unfair expectations of them. Grace stated:

> There is an expectation of students of color to self-disclose. Like, you’re supposed to, in a way, you’re there for other students to benefit from, so I don’t blame other students of color for not saying anything or just coming to class and then just leaving. And that sucks.

Grace stated her frustration that, for the most part, “I just look away. Put your head down and just keep doing what you need to do.” Kevin similarly described not wanting to expend energy unnecessarily: “If someone starts an argument, I often don’t reply,

because I don't have time to talk to them, and I have stuff to do, and as long as I get the grade, I am fine."

A couple of students specifically stated they disengaged because of their fear of contributing to stereotypes and negative feelings about their racial group. Melissa worried about "not speaking for everybody that looks like me." Jason stated:

> I probably could've spoke more, but . . . I don't want to give people the wrong idea about Native Americans because whether we choose to be or not, we're ambassadors of where we're from, and if I rub them the wrong way, I don't want people to think, well everybody from over there is like this, or everybody from there is like that. So I try to walk a pretty narrow path.

William was specifically concerned about reinforcing lower expectations of students of color, saying, "You've got to really think about whether what you're saying is valid or, yeah, a lot of times you get cited for not being smart, just because of the color of your skin."

The silence of these students may be mistaken for indifference when it is anything but. Melissa related how she sometimes cannot respond due to the intensity of her emotion: "[A White student] said, 'What is it in some people's culture that they just don't value education?' . . . I couldn't answer it because I was so mad." Many students who shut down in the classroom sought to release their emotions outside of the classroom, seeking the safety of friends, family, or one-on-one conversations. Melissa noted, "I can't respond in that setting. I definitely go home and respond to family or to friends." Sandra remembered that after attending a class in which she felt unable to participate, "I would just be so angry and I would just spill all my anger to my friends."

Speaking Out

Though most students reported an involved, often exhausting process of managing their participation in discussions about race, some students experienced no difficulty at all. Brianna realized she was different than most students of color, saying, "I can understand why some of the students here may have to think about what they're going to say." Brianna, however, said, "Myself, I'm outspoken, so when we started to get into topics and assignments, it came pretty easy." She noted, "A lot of African Americans . . . just let the teachers or the students talk, because they really don't know or they don't want to speak up. I'm like, no . . . I'm not about to sit back." Brianna attributed her unique ability to speak out to her upbringing, "Just being raised in my household, you're not holding anything back, you're going to speak your mind," and her self-confidence, "I could care less if I'm less welcome, because I don't care what other people think. That's just me, because I'm on this campus like I'm the baddest thing walking."

Daniel also expressed an attitude of not caring about others' opinions. When asked how he is able to speak out, he stated, "I feel like I have experienced enough in my life to where I shouldn't care about other people's opinions. And I could care less about what people think, because there are always skeptics." Hector felt that being outgoing helped him to engage in discussions on race, saying, "I like to talk and I'm pretty out there when it comes to just throwing yourself out there." These students were largely aware of their unique ability to speak openly and comfortably about race and ethnicity, attributing this ability to their personalities, upbringing, self-confidence, and lack of concern for the opinions of others.

Choosing Not to Be Angry

That many students of color experience negative emotions as a result of multicultural and diversity classes was undeniable. A number of students, however, made a conscious decision not to be angry about race and diversity issues. Of the increased attention he received in diversity classes, Hector said, "I can see some people getting angry; but, to me, it doesn't matter." Hector even said that he did not mind when his identity was mistaken by White students who wanted him to share Chicano experiences: "I mean, I'm not Chicano, but . . . I was, like, oh, okay. So, in my eyes, I can distinguish, right? But I know why they couldn't distinguish because they haven't been in the culture. So, I was just like, eh, if that's what you want to see, that's fine." He stated, "Life is too short to be angry." Jason also remarked that he does not harbor negative emotions because "I don't hold vendettas." Zoe, while admitting to negative feelings in classes, said, "I feel if you take it too much to heart, then it's just bad for you personally, to always be like, oh, I'm so discriminated against, da-da-da-da-da. I mean, I don't accept it, but then again, I don't dwell on it." Tiffany described:

> I don't have those notions like, okay, there was slavery back in the day, you're White, you all created slavery, so I'm mad at every single White. You can't think of stuff like that. It's the past, and as hurtful as it was and as painful as it was, that's what was going on in that timeframe. So I can't put those thoughts into my head, because then I'll be resentful towards others, and . . . I don't think that's any way I would want to live my life.

Some students stated they did not mind taking on the role of an educator in class, often out of a desire to help others understand. Cordelia stated, "I don't mind taking the role of a teacher, because . . . especially if a teacher is White, in a privileged class, they can't articulate what's going on." She often disclosed personal experiences in order to try to enlighten others. Similarly, Hector felt comfortable using his background to inform

other students: “It’s probably because I want people to understand as opposed to not understanding.” Hector said he encouraged other students of color to also speak out in order to facilitate understanding. He described an incident in which a Black student privately expressed her disbelief to him regarding a comment made in class about Africa. Hector said, “I told her, ‘Oh, they’re not trying to be ignorant or anything. That’s just what they understand, as well as what the text is telling them, so feel free to tell them why they’re wrong.’” He remembered the Black student asked him how the White students could be so ignorant. Hector responded, “It’s because they’ve probably never been in that culture and they don’t understand and you should help them understand.”

Speaking Through Discomfort

Students also felt ambivalent about speaking out. Tiffany said she would share incidents of racism she had experienced in order to provide “an example” for her classmates. She said, “I hate having to be an example, but I like being able to give an example to help others learn.” She explained, “I don’t like being singled out like that, based on I’m a woman or I’m Black. I don’t like those situations. I’m glad that I can be helpful, but it doesn’t feel good.” Arturo reflected on the fact that he often played the role of “mediator” in discussions on race, trying to create common bonds and understanding. He said:

> Growing up, I’d go home and it’s one way, one culture, and then I go out to the world abroad and it’s a different culture. So I learned to balance both of them and work within both spheres, with the inability of ever being included in either one. It’s kind of lonely that way.

Students like Tiffany and Arturo accepted that they would have to pay a personal price for providing the service of speaking out about race.

Several students felt compelled to speak up, despite the discomfort involved, because of a desire to make things better for others, or as a matter of principle. Cordelia explained her willingness to self-disclose in diversity classes: "I can actually make a difference so it might be a little better for my little girl." For Grace, speaking up was rooted not in a desire to impact others, but in a principled desire to express herself, even in the face of opposition. She said, "My experience in diversity classes has always been a personal need to say my piece because no one else will say it for me." She further explained, "I do it mostly for myself; because if I don't say it, then I just beat myself up. . . . I feel like it's good for me, as a person, to say what I need to say." Grace mused about a class in which she admitted she had stopped participating, due to her anger about the level of discourse. She said, "Maybe I need to go in there and be a big jerk about it and be like, you know what, shut up! This is what I think! And see what happens. . . . Maybe I should just do that for myself." Though Grace doubted how much other students were listening to her opinions, she speculated, "I think, also, that other people want to hear it, even if they don't know. I'm not saying that I'm some great person who's, like, I'm doing it for the people, but it's just like no one else is going to do it."

Using Humor

A couple students learned to use humor to manage awkward discussions about race. When she felt singled out because of her race, Tiffany said, "Sometimes I'll make jokes." Hector likewise noted that when asked to lead a discussion about race, "I usually end up making jokes about everything while I'm talking about it and because I like people to have a good time as well. So, yeah, I really don't mind it and it's fun for me."

Hector also described laughing when other students looked at him during discussion of heated racial issues: “I always thought it was weird, they look over to me, and for them to know that it’s okay, I usually laugh it off. That way they’re like, oh, yeah, he’s fine with it.” Laughter formed an important part of the blasé attitude Hector adopted in relation to being singled out as a person of color: “Sometimes you see them looking at you for approval . . . and I always just laughed and I was, like, ha, whatever, who cares?”

Regretting Speaking Decisions

For many students, the mental and emotional toll of deciding when and how to speak did not end with the end of class. Students described replaying moments from class in their heads afterwards, asking themselves if they made the right decision to speak up or to remain silent. If they had spoken up, they wondered if they picked their words correctly and how they could have said things better. Sometimes they wished they hadn’t tried at all. If they had remained silent, they often wished they had had the courage and quickness to speak. Sandra noted, “I sometimes regret it and then I think, I should’ve said this, I should’ve said that.” Ethan remembered that he remained silent following an incident in which a student challenged his ability to speak on American Indian issues because he is biracial: “That’s maybe why I didn’t say anything, quite honestly, because I don’t feel authentic enough.” He said: “That’s one time I really regret not saying anything. . . . I don’t think I was being honest with myself by staying quiet.” Arturo felt the desire to speak out many times, only to let those times pass by because he lacked the confidence to express himself in a way that others would understand: “There are so many times I’ve wanted to be like, that’s not how it is . . . or this is my framework, or what if

you thought about it like this?" Jason remarked on the sheer amount of time he spent processing the discussions in his diversity class: "Most of the times in that class, I would just think about it all day. I'd go on and I'd sit there and I'd . . . reflect and think about what happened in class and how I should've responded."

Changing Speaking Patterns

Despite similarities, each student had his or her own unique calculus which helped determine when and how to speak out about race. Students also went through different stages of participation, altering their approaches based upon their experiences and beliefs about the effects of voicing their opinions. For example, Ethan stated that he used to relish hearing uninformed comments and opinions, stating, "I welcomed comments like that so that I could educate them." As time passed, he became disillusioned because "I don't know that I ever really educated anyone. I think it just maybe made an enemy, made someone defensive. Maybe they didn't speak up the next time they had a genuine thought." He related his reaction to student presentations that contained factual errors on American Indian tribes: "You want to point it out, but would they remember that? Would anyone really care?" Arturo described making the opposite journey, noting that he used to remain silent about diversity issues until he witnessed the impact of another student of color speaking out. He said, "It made me realize that I have to stand up and say something when these things happen, especially if I'm aware of them. I think it was so powerful of an experience."

Almost all students agreed that multicultural classes are not like other classes. Students of color expended significantly more time and energy managing their participation and reactions in multicultural classes than any other.

Something Finally Makes Sense: Positive Multicultural Experiences

By the time they are required to take a diversity class, many students of color have low expectations in terms of what they expect from a multicultural classroom. They have learned there are many kinds of silence. There is the silence of not being able to speak up about race. There is the silence of people not wanting to hear what they have to say or invalidating their experiences. There is even the silence of being asked to speak for the wrong reasons. Many students of color have experienced all these forms of silence in their education on multicultural and diversity issues. Some, drawing upon a desire to help others or remain true to themselves have learned to speak anyway. Others stay silent, just trying to make it through. No matter their choices, however, students of color want to be heard. This was the simple central feature of the positive multicultural experience: Students felt heard. They felt seen. They spoke.

Sandra described it this way:

> School wasn't just school any more. So to me, I just felt really happy. I felt like I could actually speak up about my experiences. That's the way I felt, because before, I couldn't. I thought people would say, "You're making that up," or "You're just too angry," so I felt like those classes enabled me to speak up about what was going on in my life.

Sandra noted that this experience meant something not only for herself but for how she viewed her whole community. She stated, "We didn't have to be an outcast. We didn't have to be in the shadows. It was a way for us to create this communication that isn't

allowed outside." Vicky stated, "Race is a touchy subject, you're afraid to say something. . . . Just to be in a class like that, it gives you some sort of comfort that, yes, you can talk about this."

For students who had spent their lives unable to discuss race and who had become accustomed to not being believed, a positive diversity class provided a powerful validation of their experiences. Rosie said, "For the first time in my life, it feels like something makes sense. Because before, you knew something was happening, you knew that that comment probably wasn't okay to say, but you just accepted it." Sandra stated:

> That's when I was introduced into White privilege and Whiteness, and that just, I felt, made so much sense, because I always felt like what I was going through didn't really mean anything, it wasn't really important. I just felt like, oh, it's just something that I have to deal with in life every single day. But once I took that course, it was like, oh my gosh, I can't believe there's people actually studying about this!

William recalled what it felt like to be able to make a presentation about his cultural background in a class, "I felt that opened up the door to really relate. . . . I felt like I wasn't a number anymore."

Many students commented on the perverse pleasure they felt in the discomfort created by discussing race. Rosie described the shock of speaking about race: "It's going to be uncomfortable, but I love that. I love it because it's finally something that we can talk about." Similarly, William said of his class, "The thing that sticks out in my mind is how it makes other people uncomfortable. And I think that's a good thing." He said, "Just living in society, a lot of these things go un-talked and they need to be addressed." William recalled sometimes he would soak in the experience of discussing something that is usually hidden:

> Especially if it was something like really juicy and good, like touching people's nerves, hitting a nerve, I would just look around to see. . . . Some people were uncomfortable. And for me it was like, yes, you all need to go through this so you can get understanding. . . . It was cool. It was really cool.

William concluded his multicultural class was "like a cave being dark and shining a little light in there and just opening it up."

A few students experienced frank and honest discussion of race as a catharsis. Sandra remembered crying the first time she heard racial inequalities discussed in a classroom. Rosie recalled, "It just brings back so many situations in my life. . . . In a couple of my classes, I could cry because it was so good. It was like, finally! I'm not even kidding you. But I would cry because it's real."

Connecting to Education

Many students felt that good multicultural classes were connected to their lives in ways other classes were not. Jason said, "You've got your biology, your anatomy, and it's good information, but sometimes it is just not interesting . . . stuff that you put in the brain to sit back there and take a test on. This stuff was like interesting because it's more relative and it was more geared towards my people." Brianna said of her class, "I've lived through it." Melissa said, "When you go to a diversity class . . . I always liked going because the class is about me." Sandra noted, "I never thought of school as being something that I could relate to with my life." Sandra said of her class, "Most of the time I didn't even think about my grade because I was so encouraged to do the work because I wanted more and more." William said of going to his multicultural class: "I didn't know if it was going to be bad or good, but even if it was bad, I was still excited just to be there. Because I felt like I always took something and I could apply it to my daily life."

Tiffany felt the excitement of having her life explained: "[The professor] addressed the issues that myself personally would go through or have been through so that other people who haven't experienced that, they understand." She said, "There was nothing in that class to me that wasn't useful, because it was all applicable and it was reality . . . and what we are dealing with now and today and have been dealing with. So to me, everything in there was relevant." Arturo put it simply: "For me it was like learning the history of myself."

Specifically, students felt the pleasure of being recognized in their classrooms. Brianna recounted a class in which the professor lectured about the origin of African American names: "I was just like, Oh! I was up and alert." She said, "I was really paying attention because he showed a video that was so great, and that's one thing I love, like when we see videos about African culture. It's just like, man, that's my culture right there." Jason recalled thinking that his own tribe would not be mentioned in his class: "All of a sudden [the professor] started talking about my tribe and I was so surprised. It felt pretty good." Students also appreciated having misperceptions about their communities corrected in diversity classes, so they could be seen for who they really are. Daniel stated, "It's better for me to take the class to inform people of what the truth is. People just take for granted what the media is saying." He felt that the best classes were "correcting the proper image that people should deserve, rather than just giving them an image that's not true." William said, "A lot of people have a stereotype or prejudice about me, like a certain way. I get a lot of stuff, you know? Ugly stuff from a lot of students. And it was good to do that, to show them my identity."

A few students noted that diversity classes came easier to them than to other students because of their personal experience with the topics. Melissa said, “All these scholarly concepts, I was like, okay, because I have experienced it.” Daniel noted a difference from his classmates: “Because the majority of the class is White . . . I relate to it better.” Hector stated, “I think I, myself, have an advantage because I come from a different culture in a majority-based population; and being a minority helps me out a lot because I can relate to a lot of the material.” He recalled a test question in which he was asked about intercultural bias, and said he felt it was easier for him “because I’m not just writing for somebody else, I’m writing for myself.” Arturo stated, “I generally love exploring myself and the way I construct things, the way I feel about things. So it didn’t make it hard. It was actually refreshing to be able to do that.” Tiffany felt that being of color helped her understand not only race but other multicultural issues as well: “[Students of color] have a better understanding of what it means to be diverse or what diversity means, because they have to deal with it every day.”

Of note, both Sandra and Rosie used the idea of a robot to evoke what they would feel like without diversity classes. Sandra said, “I would be like a robot. . . . I would just come to school to be able to do something better for my life.” Rosie said: “Without these diversity classes, you would have robots. I mean, you’re finally talking about real things. You’re finally changing somebody’s life. You’re finally . . . holding a mirror up to their faces.” In these comments, the power of multicultural classes to breathe life and humanity into education for students is color is evident.

Connecting to Friends and Family

The conversation about race, once sparked, spread to families and friends as students eagerly shared what they learned in the classroom. Arturo recalled his consuming desire to share: "Any conversation I would be like, 'Oh, and then in my [diversity] class, I learned this.' And we would go on and continue to have these conversations about all of it." Cordelia remembered going home to her mother every day to talk about her diversity class to get her mother's reaction: "So then I'll be able to come back to school and say, 'Okay, well, my mom said this. Is this true?'" Ethan shared things he learned in his diversity class with his siblings, peppering their conversation with "Did you know this? Did you know this?" Hector related, "I would ask my mom about something [I learned in class], and then we ended up having a four-hour conversation, and my wife would be there as well, because we ended up talking about everything." Sandra remembered that after talking to her parents about her diversity class, "they were just as excited as I was. . . . I would tell them, 'Mom, Dad, we're not a problem.' . . . That would cheer them up, to know that there is this community up here that doesn't look at us as a problem, or doesn't look at our experiences as they're just trash." Sandra noted, "It wasn't just me impacted by my involvement, but I was able to transfer that on to them and to my aunts and uncles." Vicky recalled talking to her family about the class and even showing her husband a video she had watched in class. She explained her desire to keep the conversation going with her family, "Because no one talks about it. No one talks about it unless you take a class that is strictly about African American experiences." William also noted that "I don't get to address [racial issues] all the time in my daily life, so when I go to that class, they're brought up, so I go to my friends or my family, or even

people in meetings, and I'll just talk about it." William said, "It seemed like I was talking about that from that class to the next class, I was talking at home like every day about that, and with other people in that class, it don't matter who it was, I was talking about something." Conversations about race, it seemed, though difficult to begin, spread rapidly once ignited. The long dormant desire to speak about race and diversity led students to extend classroom conversations into every corner of their lives.

Learning the Language

The experience of having their lives recognized and acknowledged in the classroom was powerful for many students of color. The benefits of positive multicultural classes, however, extended beyond validation. Through classes, students could learn not only that they mattered, but how to speak. Often, they felt they were given tools to describe what they had already known but could not quite put into words. Melissa explained she had struggled to express herself because "I just didn't have the language." She stated that she can speak better "now that I've taken those classes and had those experiences, because I know . . . how to get the point across, but not in a harmful or, should I say, a tacky way." Zoe said, "[The professor] gave me more terminology, obviously, a more academic climate." She noted, "It's empowering, because you can more exactly identify what you're trying to say." Sandra remarked upon the benefit of knowing academic terms: "In school, I feel like you have to be, you have to act in a certain way and you have to say things in this professional manner in order for someone to pay attention to you." She said, after she learned the terms, "I just wasn't going to say, 'You know what, this person did this to me this one time,' and I could actually say,

'Well, this experience is institutional racism.'" She noted, "Those classes were able to give me that vocabulary and also that confidence."

Ethan specifically connected learning terminology with self-awareness: "I was able to contextualize my own experience, to give that anxiety a name. I had unknowingly, all of my life, internalized racism." Likewise, Zoe said, "Finally I had terms to describe what my feelings were. It was nice to have the ability to sort out my own feelings and learn about others and how they might feel. I am more confident being an African American woman." Arturo remembered that, as he learned about diversity issues, "Light switches started clicking about my own experience, and even the way I've been able to frame myself now is as a result of that class." It is striking that one of the main benefits students of color derived from multicultural classes was learning how to name their experiences, both to themselves and to others. They learned to have a voice.

In addition, students appreciated learning to frame their experiences within a historical and societal context. Speaking of racial inequality, Sandra said, "I hadn't really asked myself why is it, what was the root of this whole problem?" Students reported a newfound appreciation of previous generations and what they had endured. Kevin remembered, "I read about the first few generations of Asian Americans and how difficult their lives were . . . they were saying you have to do better than these White devils or you're not going to get what you deserve." He said, "That made me feel how hard the first few generations worked." Ethan recalled that learning about the American Indian Movement helped him appreciate his father, "just seeing what he had to deal with." Cordelia remembered learning about deportations in the 1960s and realizing that's what happened to her grandmother: "Those things hit home and it was like, okay, I know

what they went through. I know what my grandmother went through." Tiffany noted that knowing history helped her move forward. She said, "I can see now why things are the way they are in terms of power and privilege. . . . Knowing the history of that helps me to understand, this is why we're in the situations that we're in today." She felt that knowing this history helped her be more objective in thinking about race: "I need to be able to separate myself from that and just look at the facts, in order to make the best decisions."

Growing from Multicultural Education

Increasing identity. The combination of feeling validated and recognized, learning the terminology for speaking about race, and better understanding the historical and societal context of their experiences led many students to feel more confident and proud of themselves and their identities. As Rosie noted, "I've wanted to be White my entire life, until I started taking classes up here." Zoe believed taking a diversity class helped her to more aware of her identity: "It empowered me because it gave me some more self-identity, and I think that's what everyone should strive for." Cordelia, who had sought out classes specifically to counter a negative self-image, said, "It allowed me to have a stronger image and a stronger point to say, 'Okay, I am somebody and we have contributed to this country.' Before that, it just never made any sense." Melissa reported a change in how she responded to people who asked her about her path to college:

> The first couple of years I wouldn't tell anyone [my scholarship] was based off diversity. It was just, I got an academic scholarship, because I was tired of people saying, "Well, how did you get here?" or "You're taking my children's spots in the University," which makes no sense. . . . But once I started to learn that both my parents are immigrants, I didn't have all the cultural capital they had, I didn't start out with all the resources, if you asked me today, I'd say I was on a diversity scholarship.

Arturo noted that taking a diversity class "definitely made me desire to self-identify . . . and then from there, to move on, to come to terms with who I am and where I fit."

Feeling empowered. Almost all students felt empowered by good diversity classes. Cordelia stated, "It's educated me on who I was so that I did have that empowering feeling of, you know what, we are great people and we can make many changes." Lucy stated she felt empowered "knowing that a lot of students of color, we all go through the same kinds of things in school, recognizing privilege, recognizing inequalities." Melissa noted that even her negative experiences in multicultural education had been empowering, because "I chose to engage at times I felt I needed to. . . . I felt it was empowering in spite of the negative experiences, because I was able to use those experiences as, well, this is what happened, so how do we fix that?"

More specifically, students felt empowered because they were able to use their newfound knowledge to better express themselves. Cordelia noted, "To have the history, to feel okay about yourself, then you can defend yourself. . . . To stand up and say, you know what, no, you are wrong, and this is why you're wrong, and this is how I feel, it's easier to do." She elaborated: "I wasn't safe in who I was. But now, after learning where my ancestors come from and their contributions to this country, I'm not afraid to stand up. . . . I feel more confident in who I am, so I can take a stand." Likewise, Kevin noted that learning about multicultural issues "gives people grounds on which to argue against injustices." Daniel stated, "The class has helped me come up with arguments against why immigration should be looked at in a different perspective." Grace noted that learning to examine race helped her beyond multicultural classes, noting, "I've been able to cultivate a really critical way of thinking that I apply to any of my other classes."

Struggling with awareness. Shining a light onto race-related issues did not come without a price for many students. Zoe describing how she initially struggled to acknowledge the truth of what she was learning in her diversity classes: "At first, I was really uneasy, to be honest, because I struggled because she caused some tension within me. It was like, I understand what she's saying, but is that really true?" Students described how recognizing the importance of race, while validating, could also feel overwhelming. Ethan said, "I wasn't prepared for [the diversity class]. I approached it all with quite a bit of hubris and I wasn't prepared for how I couldn't remove myself from any of the horrific elements in it." Ethan admitted that he needed to take a break, saying "I'm really kind of stagnant with it all right now, because I can't unlearn it, but there's a hesitation to learn more." Arturo said of taking diversity classes, "It can be liberating, but it can also be incredibly frustrating, because you start seeing injustice, you start framing things and thinking of things critically, and that's incredibly frustrating and it makes me angry." Grace recalled her reaction after viewing a documentary about Korean Americans during the 1992 Los Angeles riots: "I just broke down. I was like, oh my God, I've never known this. So for me, I always knew that my family was impacted by it and our friends were impacted by it, but I'd never understood the extent." Rosie said of race: "to actually take a minute to critique it is a scary thing." She described how her diversity classes forced her to think back on her life: "You really go back in your normal life and you start critiquing things. And then you realize, oh, it's because I'm brown." Cordelia felt less safe after learning about injustices that had occurred in the past: "The White dominant class would come in and take your children because you were considered a dirty Mexican and you couldn't handle your children. . . . That to me is really hard because what . . .

prevents it now, from anybody walking in and taking my child?" As Melissa said, "I love diversity classes, but they're hard."

Engaging in activism. For many students, examining racial issues in positive multicultural classes motivated them to work for change. Cordelia stated that taking diversity classes led her to choose a career working as an activist for equal rights. She said:

> When I first started school . . . I wanted to do business law because I just wanted to make the money, and it's all about the money. . . . Before, even if [injustice] happened, it's like, well, I can't change it, I can't do anything, so why pay attention to it? It's just going to piss me off and make me have a bad day, so I'll ignore it. So now it's like, okay, I'm going to say something and I'm going to make it an active point to try to change it.

Zoe said knowing more about diversity issues "gives me a more internal motive to just do better." William said of a diversity class, "This is just a taste of what you should be doing, and if you continue to do this and help give back, just working in society and giving back to anyone, you'll find that it will only benefit you." Rosie said, "It's almost like [the class] made me a believer in the good fight again, you know? Because the good fight is so overwhelming to think about, but you can really change people's lives. In these classes, lives were changed." She stated, "I've felt every time at the resolution of the class, go out and take what you've learned and almost hold that recognition and do something better with that."

Rosie explicitly connected her desire to work for change with feeling that her experiences were recognized and validated:

> Finally, something in my life makes sense on paper. It makes sense that it would happen because I've had this feeling, saying that's wrong. I don't know how to stand up for it, I don't know A, B, and C about it, but all I know is in my heart and in my gut, that did not feel good for that to happen. . . . You come to these

> classes and you just explained A, B, and C for me, now I can take that back and stand up to the next person.

Melissa likewise noted, "I felt my experiences were validated; and, in turn, I could figure out why I experienced them the way I did and then how to help maybe others who have had my same situation." For Tiffany, understanding the sources of oppression was a catalyst for her to try to make things better. She said, "To me, I need to understand diversity and society and power and class and privilege in order to understand how I can help . . . the ones who have no voice." Tiffany also reported that taking a diversity class helped her decide to pursue a career helping others. She explained, "The diversity class almost makes you realize why you're here. What is your purpose? . . . I want to help others, and I want to make a change."

A few students reported that they had become involved in specific programs related to community service or activism as a result of taking a diversity class. For example, one student helped organize a march for immigration rights, using her knowledge of past demonstrations to maximize the impact of the march. Another, through her involvement in a student group, was able to communicate with state legislators about affirmative action and tuition for undocumented students.

Learning forgiveness. A deeper understanding of racial injustice motivated many students to speak out, to become more involved in their communities, and to work for change and equality. But it also led some students to a different (though not mutually exclusive) kind of response: forgiveness. Tiffany explained how her diversity class helped her not to feel hatred towards other groups:

> It's hard sometimes to exercise control or restraint, but then you have to put yourself in other people's shoes. . . . For the students who were more naïve or ignorant of culture, it helped me to understand. This person . . . grew up in a

> neighborhood where there were no brown people or there was only one brown person in class.

Zoe likewise said:

> The White majority has always been in the power seat, or however you want to say it. That being said, not all White people are like that, either. And that's an important thing to consider. . . . A lot of White people are advocates for other races, so that's been something that's helped me.

Along a similar line, Sandra said of her classmates:

> They're just so unaware that they're White. So that's the way that I was able to put what I learned into my life. So, I felt like, okay, you don't know, you might not know what you're doing necessarily, but I know that by me being so angry at you and hating you, it's just going to make it worse. I guess it made me more patriotic because I want what's better for this country.

Sandra concluded with a laugh, "Because if I would've never taken the courses, I would've been pissed off and still just fighting, you know, cutting everyone off on the freeway that was White."

Feeling connected. Being able to speak about race also reduced the sense of isolation many students of color felt. Lucy stated, "It's nice to see, especially when it's a broad range of different students in the classroom with different backgrounds, it's good to see, hey, cool, they're interested in diversity, we can talk about it, so you just feel a sense of community." Rosie said, "I love that you're not alone. . . . It takes one professor or one topic to bring all of these emotions out and people are ready to talk about it." Sandra recalled a professor who specifically reached out to her. "It's hard, especially because I've been here since I was a little girl and you see everywhere in the media, you see it everywhere in politics, and she's the one who would always tell me . . . Your experiences are considered. You're not alone." For Sandra, feeling connected to the community made her realize that working for equality was not a rebellious act but patriotic one. She said of

her increasing activism, “I thought, if I do this, I’m going to get in trouble or they’re going to tell me, oh, you’re just not patriotic. I was able to accept the fact that I’m an American. I don’t care what anybody else says.”

For students who may never have expected to be able to speak about race, positive experiences of multicultural education had the potential to be transformative. As Rosie described, “I think it’s changed my world. I think it’s changed who I am. I think it’s changed the outlook, me, as a minority, not just ethnically, but I think that the education I’ve received on any kind of diversity is lifelong. It will stay with me for the rest of my life.”

What It’s All About: Learning Multicultural Education

The difference between a positive and negative multicultural education experience was dramatic. Multicultural classes could be invalidating or empowering, painful or exhilarating, based upon a number of determining factors. I will discuss these factors and how they influence a multicultural class. Foremost among these factors was the professor. In order to explain how the professor impacts the class, I will consider how students view multicultural knowledge. I will also touch upon how other students impact how students of color experience multicultural education.

Professor Factors

Students agreed that the professor was the key in determining if their experience of multicultural education was positive or negative. Lucy noted that the professor is “the most important person in the class.” Cordelia said, “The professors really controlled the class’ reaction and the way that the class would impact me.” Grace said, “It’s really

different from when a professor says something and it's something you need to learn for your test or your paper, and it's another thing when students say things." Brianna explained why the professor is so important in a diversity class in particular:

> You instill these types of [racist] ideologies and judgments in a big class, okay? It's already a cycle that's going on in the home, but . . . where it really comes into play is in these institutions. So if you really instill these judgments and stuff in these college students' heads, I think that's even worse.

In fact, a number of students had chosen which diversity class to take specifically because of a professor recommended through an informal grapevine of students of color. Because of the importance of the professor, a few students advocated for more scrutiny of professors who teach diversity topics, such as Brianna who stated, "Priority-wise, I think the diversity classes should be evaluated first, more than just regular classes." Professors in diversity classes are imbued with tremendous power over the experiences of students of color. They have the potential to tolerate or perpetuate harm but also the potential to empower and transform.

Speaking to power. Students were clear on what they wanted to learn about and discuss in classes on race and diversity issues and what, from their perspective, was relatively incidental. Tiffany said, "You have these diversity classes where you're talking about food and music, which is all really important in understanding other people, but I think you still need to understand society and individuals as a whole." She said what she liked about her class was that "it's actually about diversity and not just about how people eat or the kind of clothes people wear, but it's talking about actual issues." Arturo stated, "I think a lot of times when people speak about other races or other ethnicities, everything's done in terms of history of culture or traditions or religion or practice, but there's so much more to that. It's so much more complex." Melissa stated, "We can talk

about culture, we can celebrate it, but actually analyzing it and questioning systems of power and things of that nature, I think that's what I enjoy learning about." Rosie said, "You need to talk about privilege. You need to talk about some form of oppression." She elaborated, "It's incredibly important. I think it's an important thing that is so embedded in everybody's life and it is embedded in our history." In a word: power. Students wanted to learn about and discuss privilege, discrimination, and oppression. They felt that diversity classes would not be complete without this element. As Sandra exclaimed when asked to imagine a diversity class that discussed culture without discussing power, "That's not what it's all about!" She added: "It would be horrible."

Sandra expressed her pleasant surprise when she first took a class on multicultural issues: "Usually when someone thinks of ethnic studies, you think of studying culture, not necessarily of racism." When asked what they had learned from their good diversity classes, students continually named issues related to power and diversity. Sandra said, "That's what interested me the most, the White privilege and the Whiteness and how racism isn't really over." Kevin stated:

> A lot of people think people who aren't successful are not successful because they're lazy. A lot of people think this society is a true meritocracy where the people who work hard get more and learning about all of these topics shines light onto these misconceptions.

Tiffany noted, "It's important to understand exactly what is going on, why is there racism, why is there oppression, why is there power, to help us understand so that we know how to deal with it." She said, "I've never had a class at a university or in high school or junior high or whatever be talking about Whites and their power and their privilege and I was just like, this is interesting!" A number of students noted departments varied in terms of how much professors from those departments would address power in

relation to race. Some students cited Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies as more hospitable to critical conversations and departments like Political Science as more avoidant.

Ethan described why, for him, a focus on racial injustice was a crucial component of a diversity class. He recalled a class in which a lot of time was spent describing poverty and social problems that are prevalent among American Indian tribes. He explained, "I would've liked to have seen the socioeconomic problems and psychological problems addressed from a perspective of symptoms of something larger." Ethan worried that while injustice was briefly touched upon, "I don't know that most of the students really grasped what that meant, the idea of White privilege." Ethan said of the White students in his class, "I was anxious that they would see it incorrectly," meaning that the White students might attribute the problems to personal weakness or failure, when "it really has to do with genocide and the rape of their culture." Ethan's concern highlights one of the reasons that, for students of color, discussing differences in power is essential to a successful multicultural class.

Professors, then, succeeded in the eyes of students of color when they successfully addressed race and power in the classroom. To do so required the courage to speak directly and openly about awkward, potentially heated topics. As Arturo noted, "I think a lot of times, people are afraid of saying stupid things or saying hurtful things, but I think it's the only way to unpack it all, is to be completely open and say what you say and to acknowledge that you're saying it." Hector stated, "Professors walk on eggshells with this type of information so as to not offend. This information cannot be brought up in this kind of manner." Sandra said that successful professors "have to be willing to

criticize the norm. . . . You're labeled, you're just a bad person if you start criticizing the government, you're not patriotic enough, you're not American, so I think they have to be willing to step out of that fear." Zoe noted of her professor, "She was never afraid to bring up the topics that would cause tension. And that, to me, was really cool." Zoe said, "Definitely, you'd have to be very confident in yourself to know you can talk about these tough issues." Grace remembered positive experiences in a diversity class: "There were also some really, really great things that happened, and I think part of that was because we had a professor who wasn't afraid."

Speaking directly. At a minimum, students wanted professors to address racial issues, including confrontations and disagreements, openly, rather than avoiding the topic. Too often, students recalled professors putting an end to potentially heated discussions about racial issues rather than allowing debate. Cordelia remembered getting into an argument with a student who classified Puerto Ricans as Hispanic: "I'm like, she's not Spaniard, she's from Puerto Rico. She's Puerto Rican. And he didn't get it. And the teacher was like, 'Okay, well, let's just stop that and move on,' and I was like, no, you need to explain." Cordelia remarked, "Once in a while, I would want [professors] to acknowledge that these little arguments are going on in classes . . . instead of shushing everybody so that there's no hostility." Grace recalled getting into an argument with a White student about the co-opting of Black culture:

> This girl in my class, this White girl, was like, "Aren't you being an essentialist?" And I was like, "Maybe, maybe I am! Why don't you check me?" . . . Let's have a conversation about this. . . . I just feel like we're not allowed to talk about things like that, because we don't want to be perceived as racist. . . . This girl and I went off for like 45 minutes, back and forth with each other, and then [the professor] was like, "Okay, we need to take a break."

Grace felt disappointed that her professor did nothing to facilitate further discussion. She continued:

> I just wanted to have really honest conversations like that. I don't want to just think about it and not do anything with it. But it's like, even at the idea of it, people are like, no! No, no, no, no, no. No. We're going to shut you down.

Lucy similarly remembered two students arguing about affirmative action in class. She recalled, "Our professor cut it off and said, 'Okay, anyway. . .' She didn't facilitate it any more, she just said, 'Okay, stop.'" Lucy wished for a different response: "She should've kept facilitating that conversation and kept it going."

Arturo recognized that addressing difficult issues required, in addition to courage, particular skills perhaps related to arbitration. Arturo remembered an instructor's response to two students disagreeing about the acceptability of reclaiming derogatory racial terms. He said:

> I wish she had counseling or therapy experience to bring [the students] up front and have them talk it out and have us chime in, or just some way to have made a little bit more understanding, because she just kind of took the wheel and swerved and went on in a different direction.

Zoe noted that the professor's comfort level with difficult conversations was crucial for making the class a safe space: "The professor sets the tone for the class. If the professor isn't comfortable, the class isn't comfortable." William summed up the myriad of personal characteristics and knowledge required from professors of diversity classes:

> You definitely have to have a passion for the students and you have to be . . . open-minded because being a diversity teacher, you're going to get so many different views and perspectives, and you have to be understanding and patient, and . . . an active listener and I think you have to be educated on a lot of different things on a lot of different levels.

Some students believed professors may not have the personal qualities necessary to facilitate discussions about race. Other students, however, wondered if professors

avoided these discussions out of apathy. William said, "It seems like sometimes the professors don't want to take the responsibility." Most students felt strongly that professors need to take responsibility for addressing difficult topics. As Grace noted, "If you don't feel like the professor is backing you up on things that might be difficult to say, it's very easy to not add anything to the class." She remembered bringing up a concern to a professor after class. "[The professor] was like, 'Why didn't you say that in class?' And I was just like, 'I don't know, why didn't *you* say it in class?'" Grace explained, "I didn't really feel like it was a safe space for me to say that, especially when you did not even address it as the professor."

Students were further disappointed when professors allowed stereotypes and derogatory statements to pass without comment. Grace said:

> Maybe this is a jaded perspective now, but I don't have faith in professors to be experts, or to challenge things. I've had experiences with professors where they put up with complete disrespect for the course or challenges from students who are obviously challenging it because they have a racist assumption.

Melissa recalled a student presentation that contained many racial stereotypes: "I was waiting for my professor to say something, but she didn't say anything." Melissa speculated that in a good diversity class, "The professor wouldn't have sat there." Sandra experienced what she felt was akin to hate speech in one of her classes and stated that the professor did nothing. She said, "The professor saw it as a freedom of speech. He tolerated that hatred."

In contrast, professors who provided students of color with positive experiences in diversity classes were direct and open in addressing difficult issues about race. Tiffany stated, "I liked how when we talked about that stuff, [the professor] did not shy away from the subject and we hit that stuff hard." Tiffany described her professor's manner as

"straight to the point," "real," and "open and direct." Similarly, William noted that he appreciated a professor's style in which there was "no pointing fingers or victimizing, they're just saying that we have these problems here in our society and let's try to solve them." William characterized his professor as "being up front with it, really blunt." Rosie stated that she likes professors who seize on heated moments to teach,

> Not minimize, like, oh, okay, we'll talk about that later. Even if you do have to move on, embrace that moment that that person just gave you because it may have taken them a lot of guts and courage to say what they had to say.

Lucy praised a professor, of whom she said, "She's not shy. Exactly. She doesn't sugarcoat anything in that class. That's what's nice." Brianna similarly remembered that a professor "had some complaints about, maybe she's too harsh, but she's just keeping it real, like she don't hold her tongue and she's very blunt. She is very blunt, and I love that." Hector recalled his professor directly confronting difference:

> My professor, and he was a really good professor, he said the biggest thing you could say to disrupt the challenge of everyone coming together as a community as a whole . . . is using the term, "Can't we all just get along?" . . . That's always something that's stuck with me, because, honestly, if you say "Can't we all just get along?" you're blatantly ignoring the fact that people are different, when it's good to embrace differences and just say, "Yeah, we're all different and we can get along, but it's not just let's get along for the sake of getting along."

Professors needed not only to directly address sensitive issues, but to do so without alienating the class. Students of color were aware of the difficulty of addressing diversity concerns and appreciated when professors were able to do so without triggering defensiveness. Vicky recalled her professor emphasizing, "We're celebrating the experience. We're celebrating it. So they told us flat out, we're not having this class to bash on other people, other races." Tiffany noted that her professor was able to address inequality factually, without making people feel blamed: "She didn't start out by pointing

the finger or pointing the blame, or making anybody feel like any less of a person than they are now, but she just brought up, 'This is what we're going to talk about and this is the reality of it.'"

The importance of the professor's ability to be direct in addressing sensitive issues is difficult to overstate. Rosie believed that classes in which sensitive issues related to inequalities went unaddressed might be more damaging than not addressing diversity at all:

> There are some [professors] who poorly, poorly, in the weakest way, approach these things, and it is so hard. In fact, I think that might be even more of a hindrance to people taking these kinds of classes, because it's not fully exposed and you're not talking about it like you have something to talk about.

Because of the difficulty of addressing diversity issues openly, the professor's expertise and passion for the subject seemed of higher importance for diversity classes. Students appreciated professors who had in-depth knowledge of diversity concerns. William believed that professors in diversity classes "have to be experts beyond experts." Kevin noted, "It takes a lot of skill and knowledge to seriously discuss race." Tiffany said, "Diversity is so important, but it can be something that's very sensitive as well, and I think you need to know what you're getting into in terms of diversity and that you are knowledgeable." Some students noted that good diversity professors seemed motivated by a passion or even a calling for the work. Grace said, before taking a class, "I would want to know that the person who's going to teach it has an investment in it." She explained, "Most people don't want to engage in this work at all, so many people don't want to deal with this. So I think maybe that's why we have some really crappy instructors." Rosie expressed admiration of professors who are able to address diversity issues:

> It's so fragile, because these are lives and people are at a crossroads, and people are going to crash into each other. . . . We're meeting in this class and it's a scary thing. It's a very intimidating thing. I can't imagine being a professor for any class of inequality. . . . I mean that takes a real calling.

The Personal Basis of Race Knowledge

Students cited many reasons why it is difficult to talk about race, despite their desire to do so. They realized that people were afraid to make mistakes, eager to avoid confrontation, uncertain of their expertise, or simply apathetic. These factors alone, however, do not capture what conversations about race and ethnicity are like for students of color. To understand what the stakes are for students of color in a diversity class, an understanding of the nature of knowledge about race is necessary. Simply put, most students of color experience knowledge about race and racism as deeply and inherently personal. Unlike knowledge about many other subjects, which students felt could be adequately gleaned from books and other traditionally academic channels, knowledge and race seemed to require personal experience. For example, Tiffany said:

> I can read anything from a book, but that doesn't make it real. It doesn't make it personal. It doesn't make me always feel that it's something that I can relate to. But when I have somebody telling me with their own words, "This is what I've been through and this is what I've seen, and you're not alone because I've been there, too," then it makes it more real.

She said, "To me, the textbook can only teach you so much, you have to experience it and live it." She concluded, "It's different when it's personal than when you just went out and studied it." Jason said, "I could put something in a book and somebody could read about it, but unless you see it, I think it's like a whole different thing." Rosie stated:

> You almost hate to say something like that, but unless you have experienced some form of oppression, I don't think it's possible to really relate to people. You can read a book about it and you can hear a story about it, but until you've

> experienced the heartbreak of poverty or being treated horrible because of things that you didn't even ask for yourself, that to me is beyond words.

Cordelia noticed other students did not necessarily share her belief that knowledge is rooted in experience. She recalled an exchange with a White male student: "He was like, 'Well, you only say this because you've experienced it.' And I was, like, 'Well, yes, your perception changes when you've experienced something,' and he was, like, 'Well, I don't think so.'" Melissa also noticed a difference from her White peers in how she valued personal experiences: "I have heard in some of my classes, it was a White student who said, 'I wish [the professor] would stop telling stories.' . . . To me, stories are knowledge." Students of color seemed more likely to characterize knowledge, specifically knowledge about race, as rooted in personal experience.

The professor's personal knowledge. As a result, students felt that teachers needed more than book knowledge to teach classes about race. Brianna stated, "If you're just a teacher teaching a diversity class and you have an understanding because of books . . . you need more than that." Cordelia stated that professors who had experienced discrimination were the most successful at teaching about inequality: "Because they went through it . . . not only do they have the experience, but they have the knowledge of what we're going through, so they can say it more." She distinguished between learning about race and knowing about race, saying of privileged people, "You may have learned about it, but you don't know it." Of a good diversity professor, Rosie said, "Her experience is like the root and soul of why she's here." Tiffany said, "Especially for a diversity class, if you can't express what you've been through in terms of diversity and everybody's just going by the PowerPoint or by the book, people don't get to understand the actual reality. . . . A book does not do it a lot of justice." Ethan similarly noted learning about race in a

classroom has limits, saying, "Academia is such a detached environment . . . so if they were looking at it incorrectly with that kind of [detachment] it would just be very not cool." Ethan described how, for him, knowledge about race could not be contained in writing. He said:

> If you wrote this down in a book and you put the book in the field, the sun would bleach the pages, the rain would wash the ink away, and it would go back into the earth. But if you really hold this inside your head, it's held in such responsibility and such respect that you don't share it with someone unless they're able to respect that space.

Rosie summed up the connection, for her, between personal experience and being a good professor in a diversity class:

> If you're going to teach these diversity classes, you're going to have to know that this is such an emotional, it is such a personal [topic]. . . . People are angry because you're bringing up moments in their life where they've been like scrap metal on the ground. . . . I'm a believer in academics, but I'm also a believer in experience. I think those who have that kind of a balance make amazing professors and almost have that passion to want to touch people's lives.

Because personal experience seemed essential to knowledge about race, students valued professors who were willing to self-disclose about their personal experiences in diversity classes. For some students, the self-disclosure gave professors a necessary aura of authority. As Hector said, "[The professor] talked about the makeup of what a Chicano is and how his background ties into that, so that helped us understand why, as an authoritative figure, he has authority to speak on these things." Vicky similarly felt that hearing the professor's personal stories made the class more "believable and credible" as well as more meaningful and powerful. Sandra valued how a professor's self-disclosures helped encouraged others to similarly speak out: "She wouldn't be afraid herself to share her life experiences with us, and she shared some pretty personal experiences with us, and that was one way that she created that environment."

Strategies to incorporate experience. The limited utility of lecturing and reading about race meant that students appreciated professors who incorporated interactive activities an attempt to widen the experience of the class. A classic example of this kind of activity would be the privilege walk. In a privilege walk, students answer questions about their backgrounds by stepping forward or back, ending with students standing in relation to each other in a rough estimation of their privilege level. As Lucy described, "It was just really good and interesting to see some people shocked about it, really eye-opening. It was like, wow! That's when it felt like we all, everyone in class . . . had a better understanding of race and privilege." Students also appreciated the use of videos and guest speakers who had personal experience in a topic. Other students enjoyed classes in which the very structure of the classroom was challenged, such as by a professor lecturing from the back of a class. William appreciated how changing traditional class dynamics led to a more equitable learning environment: "Because I think being a good educator, you have to be the student sometimes."

The importance of the professor's background. Students struggled with the importance of a professor's own racial and ethnic background to his or her success as a diversity instructor. Most preferred professors of color in diversity classes. As Tiffany said, "I like that she's a minority speaking to it. . . . If you're not a minority in a certain situation, you don't understand what the oppressed group is going through." She valued the different perspective offered by professors of color, noting "Most of the professors are White, they just hear it from that one perspective." William stated he believed professors of color who "have had those hardships, they have a little bit more to offer in a classroom setting in that they have that insight for students." Cordelia said, "It seems

more like my minority teachers get it more and can articulate it better and are [more] willing to listen and let people share their experiences than the White teachers. The White teachers are like, 'Okay, moving on.'"

Professors of color also offered students a certain promise of empathy and understanding, creating a more trusting relationship. Tiffany stated:

> I can't go to a Caucasian professor and be like, "Oh, my gosh, I had a rough day at work and somebody said this racist or prejudiced comment to me." You can't do that with somebody who doesn't experience that. I mean, they can show empathy, but it's in a different form than somebody who's been through similar experiences.

Lucy noted that she was able to open up more to a professor of color because "I just feel like I'll be validated more." As Sandra said, "It would be ideal to have a professor of color teaching a diversity course, because I think that students that are just coming in are going to look at this White professor and it's going to take a while to have that trust."

Many students of color expressed doubts that a White professor could effectively teach a multicultural class that dealt with race-related issues. Sandra wondered:

> A White person who doesn't really have all that knowledge and wasn't brought up with a lot of people of color surrounding him, he's going to just see people of color in a cultural perspective. He might not be able to see all of this other stuff that's going on.

Cordelia felt that White professors would lack emotional connections to the material: "I think [a White professor] can get the knowledge across, but the feelings behind it to really make somebody move isn't there." She recalled, "With the White professors, they don't seem to have as much emotion. . . . It's like, 'Okay, you're reading the book and I have to give you this, but moving on.'" Cordelia also worried about the awareness level of White professors: "They'll say something that's very derogatory and they don't even realize it."

Students felt suspicious of professors who attempted to claim an understanding of their experiences without a shared background. Jason recalled that his professor, on the first day of class, stated that he had Native American ancestry. In time, however, Jason learned "he was like the smallest sliver and he didn't grow up Native American, because there's a big difference. You can have the blood, but if you don't live the life, it's different." Melissa was upset that a White professor claimed that she had experienced something similar to students of color because she had spent time in South Africa. Melissa said, "In terms of population down there, as I understand it, the White are the minority; however, in the power structures, they are the majority. They control everything, I mean, if you look at apartheid. So her using that example really wasn't comfortable." Melissa remembered her discomfort when that same professor asked to speak to her and another student of color:

> She specifically approached us after class and said, "What can I do to make the class better? Because I understand you didn't have that great of an experience." I was thankful that she did that, but then at the same time, I didn't know how to tell her, "Well, you shouldn't be teaching this class for me."

Despite a preference for professors of color and doubts about White professors, students were reluctant to advocate that racial or ethnic background be used as a litmus test for diversity professors. Instead, they felt that White professors could be effective under certain circumstances. For example, some students felts that White professors could be successful teaching about race if they had other experiences of discrimination. Melissa believed that White professors benefitted White students in the class, but that students of color benefited from professors of color. She advocated "a dual teaching system, maybe a person of color and a White person, and that way, [while] you're still talking about the same issues, they might have different perspectives."

For Zoe, part of making the class safe meant an acknowledgement of privilege. She believed that a White male professor could succeed as a diversity professor "if he was willing to say, 'I'm the master status and this is how I feel. . . . Even though I'm part of the master status, I'm willing to go different, and not pitifully, but because I want to.'" Other students also named an awareness of privilege and power as the key element for White professors teaching about race. Sandra stated, "You cannot have a White professor not knowing anything about White privilege and Whiteness and just seeing everything from his viewpoint." For Grace, this awareness of privilege was more important than ethnicity in determining who would be an effective teacher. She said, "I've heard about professors who are professors of color who really uphold ways that empower White people in Ethnic Studies courses, and I'm just like, what? . . . If you're going to teach a diversity course, you cannot be invested in Whiteness."

Though in general students of color believed it was possible for White professors to teach a diversity class well, only a few had experienced it. Brianna believed a White professor had succeeded in discussing race because he had experienced discrimination as gay man. Arturo described a White female professor who "would check her privilege constantly throughout the class. And she would say that. She would say, 'I'm a White woman and I have this privilege.' Constantly." He witnessed how this professor's example of owning her privilege transformed the class: "Because of that, the students started to check their privilege, too. So you became conscious of what you're saying and why you're saying it. And I noticed that of the other White students." He appreciated that the professor did not single out the students of color in her classroom and instead consistently challenged the White students: "They would say comments and then she

would say, 'Well, where is that coming from?' Or, 'Why do you think you can say that?'"

Sandra recalled:

> We had this professor, she was White, and she came and she was a guest speaker, and she started talking to us about White privilege and Whiteness . . . and in the beginning, I was like, "Who is this White lady telling me all this?" and I felt offended, but . . . then I realized, hey, she's what's called a White ally.

Sandra appreciated that the White professor did not single her out and that she spoke extensively about privilege. She said, "I didn't have a problem after that. I didn't have a problem because I thought, okay, she didn't treat me the way other professors would." Avoiding the mistakes of other White professors and, above all, being honest and open about their own privilege helped these professors create a positive experience for students of color.

Modeling and Mentoring from Professors of Color

Just as many students of color described an initial discomfort with White professor, many described a sense of comfort with professors of color. Many students of color had never had a professor who shared their racial or ethnic background before stepping into a diversity class. Just knowing that a person of color could become a professor was empowering for some. Cordelia said, "Maybe it was because she was Chicana so I could self-identify with her. It's like, well, she made it and maybe I can make it, too." Brianna expressed her delight at having a Black professor for the first time: "It's just ridiculous. Like, he's so intellectual and, of course, that wouldn't be the norm, as society would say, an African American male with a Ph.D. . . . It's great." Rosie felt

inspired by the success of one of her professors of color: “It’s amazing, because that right there is defying the odds.”

Professors of color also took on mentoring roles with students of color, providing them with unique experiences of support and encouragement. Brianna realized that she worked harder in school as a result of her professor:

> To have a professor at the same ranks, that’s been through the same experiences I’ve been through, [who] wants to see you succeed . . . this is probably the first time I’ve felt a little pressure because . . . he looks at us like, you all can do this too, you all can do it.

Hector recalled how his diversity professor “actually asked me if I was going to go to graduate school, which I thought was interesting. I was like, well, that’s the first time a teacher has actually taken an interest.” He said the professor’s interest in him “helped me, I think, want to learn better and more about every subject.” Melissa credited her professors of color with encouraging her to continue to graduate school. William remembered one of his professors who “took me under her wing and she was like really on me. She was really pushing me. . . . You need someone to push you, especially if you’re kind of alone.” He said:

> You don’t see Natives being represented in society as a positive image, and just having her be that and working towards that, just saying that, “You could do it too,” because a lot of people in my family and friends that are Natives, they’re struggling just to get by, and having that role model and mentor was huge for me.

The importance of finding a mentor was felt perhaps even more by Grace, who had not been able to make that connection. She said, “There are very, very few Asian American professors on this campus . . . so it’s hard for me to find people, to find a mentor or just to find someone who is faculty or staff who is willing to give me some guidance.” Grace’s disappointment weighed upon her: “I don’t know how to deal with

any of this, and I feel like I don't have any mentors. I feel like I have nobody here." For students of color, diversity classes were an important way to connect to faculty members who shared their background and could offer inspiration and guidance. The difficulty of managing without this connection underscores the value of this function of diversity classes.

Discussing the Unspoken

Students expressed a distinct preference, not only for specific professors, but also for which classroom activities they preferred in multicultural classes. The foundation of learning for students of color in diversity classes was discussion. Students repeatedly stated that discussion was necessary and, along with acknowledgement of racial inequality, believed that a professor's ability to manage a discussion was the key to the success of a diversity class. In good class discussions, students of color could speak out about their experiences and understandings and learn from others. Students of color treasured these opportunities to speak about race. As Arturo stated of his positive diversity experience, "I loved that about that class also, how we talked about it all. And it was really a discussion-based or discussion-driven class." He remembered, "It was really cool to, in our discussions, go back and forth and just say, 'Well, this is my perspective,' and then they would say, 'This is my perspective,' and somehow we'd come to some agreement or understanding." Over and over, students identified discussion as an integral, central part of their positive diversity experiences. As Grace stated, "I think lecture is necessary, but I also think dialogue is almost more important than the lecture." Tiffany said:

> I think the more open discussion, interactive-oriented classes are better. I don't like classes where I just go sit and listen to the lecture. . . . It seems so impersonal, just like you're going by the book. I like more where we're not going by any rules, but it seems real. This is real life, this is our reality, and everybody gets to experience it.

Lucy noted, "I noticed in a diversity class versus an ordinary, another class, there are more times to have discussion." Lucy remembered: "We'd get on each other's level about things and just come out of the classroom like, wow! I mean, I learned a lot. It was just a good experience to be able to openly discuss with each other, instead of just having a lecture." Melissa noted that in good diversity classes, "there always seems to be a further discussion. There's no endpoint or no conclusion . . . no definite ending. It was always a continual questioning and critical analysis." Sandra said a class without discussion "would be a really horrible classroom . . . where I'm not even able to talk or speak out, and where the professor is just doing all the talking and I'm just sitting there, just listening."

Students relished the sense of connection and togetherness in a class where open discussions prevailed. Hector stated that discussion "really helps bridge the gap . . . because you make friends real quick and then you feel a sense of comfort, so you can actually get through a class." William said, "Even though there [were] arguments, I think it's good. It's like family members fighting it out. . . . If a family doesn't argue, then, I don't know, it seems unnatural." He embraced arguments, saying they led to "a more intimate relationship and it's just worth doing. It's part of college, part of life, working through those arguments and dealing with that stress." Briana also brought up the idea of discussion creating a sense of family in class: "We had some great discussions. It wasn't just about the lecture. They didn't lecture a lot. We were always involved and talking and

telling certain opinions or we weren't scared to ask questions. We felt like a family, literally. It was just great."

The professor's role in discussions. Again, the professor determined if discussions in diversity classes were open, honest, and comfortable for students of color. Professors who did not manage classroom discussions left many students of color feeling unsafe and unable to speak out. As Rosie said, "I've felt by peers in the class that my experiences perhaps may have been minimized . . . I think that falls on the teacher." She explained, "Any hot topic, though, you need a moderator. You need somebody to really guide it." Rosie believed the tenor of the class was determined by the professor, "It does not have anything to do with the peers. It has to do with the leader." Arturo said, "Definitely, definitely, the teacher has to create a safe space." Students wanted professors to be active in their management of class discussions. As Cordelia said, "If the professor is like, 'You guys need to listen,' and controls the situation, I can feel free to express my opinions. But if the professor is one of the ones that [says], 'Yeah, uh huh, uh huh,' takes the back seat of what's going on, then I won't say much."

Specifically, students wanted their professors to directly address and curtail derogatory comments in order to make the classroom a safe space for discussion. Sandra recalled a class in which a student made a derogatory comment and the professor did not respond. She said:

> I would have wanted [the professor] to ask him something like, "You should probably consider other students that are sitting here, they might not have your viewpoint, and the way that you're saying all of this, just consider your classmates." It doesn't have to be something like, "I disagree with you, stop saying that right now, it's hateful!"

Grace remembered an incident when a student used a racial epithet in class:

> I looked at my professor and it was just sitting in the air. And I was just like, this is really super fucked up, and I turned around and I was just like, "You cannot say that." But my professor did not back me up at all. . . . As a class, we couldn't have the conversation we needed to move past that. . . . It was the worst.

William said that, while he generally preferred professors who remained neutral, he believed professors needed to take responsibility in some cases to make the boundaries of what is acceptable clear. He said, "If it's like a political debate, they shouldn't be taking sides, or if it's a perspective or a religious or some sort of belief, they shouldn't be taking sides. But if someone's getting hurt, yeah. They definitely need to take a side."

Conversely, students greatly appreciated professors who were able to manage difficult discussions. As Arturo stated, "Starting a conversation is so awkward, and people feel so awkward about being wrong, or being misinterpreted. I think when you create a safe space . . . at least you can make errors, room to speak." He believed that professors need particular skills in order to manage discussion about diversity: "I think they do need backgrounds in some sort of conflict resolution. . . . There has to be somebody who can deal with that and do it in a constructive way." He remembered a professor who was adept at facilitating discussion in class: "We would go so far and then we'd look to our facilitator or our teacher and be like, so what now? And then she would take us further." Brianna recalled her professor showed an ability to be comfortable with heated discussions: "Folks don't even want to touch on touchy subjects like that because they don't want to have no altercations. But they have to understand that it's going to be heated." Grace praised her professor by saying, "She took it in a direction that was more interactive and somehow, somehow, she created a space that everyone felt really comfortable speaking in, which was amazing. It was just like, wow." Sandra remembered how her professor created positive discussions by demanding respect: "She would always

say things like, 'It's okay, it's okay if we disagree with each other, you don't have to agree with my viewpoint, but we have to create that respect among ourselves.'" Likewise, Zoe remembered how students in her class gradually opened up because the professor demanded a respectful environment: "Everybody was really, really respectful, probably because of her saying, 'This is a safe space and I want to talk about it, let's talk about it and we're not moving on until we do.' . . . At first, it was almost forced, but later on, people were very anxious to share."

For many students, the professor's genuine recognition and appreciation of their personal experiences was necessary to create an open discussion in a diversity class. Zoe remarked that her professor was accepting of students' opinions:

> When people would say something that was maybe offish, she was never like, "Why did you say that?" She was never like that. She said, "Okay, can you expand on that? Like, help me understand." So it was never, ever, I mean, we talked about a lot of negative stuff, but the attitude in the class was never negative.

Melissa appreciated a professor who took the time to get to know students by asking them to share pivotal experiences in their lives. She remembered, "I was able to see where other students were coming from, and it wasn't all combined into one word. . . . I also got to know the professor, because he did it as well, and I feel like that opened things up, where people were just more sensitive." Sandra also appreciated a professor who showed her caring for students by asking about their lives: "I felt like we were just important, we were important being here in this institution. We weren't just one more student. And whatever we had to go through, we knew who to share it with." She credited that sense of caring for helping her to feel comfortable: "I was also given that confidence through my peers and my professor, like, oh, someone cares about me and I'm not alone

in this. So I think it gave me those tools to be able to speak up in my classes." Rosie noted, "The teacher's respect to the students I think is above anything, and I think for them to really understand and to care . . . listening to your comments, not minimizing any experience or any comment that you have." William appreciated how his professor created a culture where he felt his personal knowledge mattered: "If it was an instructor that didn't value those things or understand them, it would be hard. And that's how the classes usually are." He wanted his professors "to bring a good, welcoming culture in their classrooms and say that everyone's opinion is valued." Students enjoyed feeling that their professors were open to learning from their experiences as well. As Brianna said, "[The professor] was very supportive in different ideologies, but he also was learning from us as well. I was telling him about a certain experience and he was like, wow, I didn't know."

Students of color understood that it is difficult for professors to teach multicultural classes. They respected and valued professors who were direct and open in discussing difficult issues, such as those related to race and race-related differences. In particular, students stated that racism and racial injustice must be addressed in order for a diversity class dealing with race to be successful. In fact, most students stated that, while professors of color might have the advantage in this area, White professors could succeed in teaching about race as long as those professors directly addressed power imbalances, such as by acknowledging White privilege. Students also agreed that successful multicultural classes were based on discussion, led by a professor who took an active role in keeping those discussions respectful, which included responding to derogatory and hurtful comments when necessary. Professors who appreciated and listened to the

personal experience and knowledge of students gained their respect and trust. Under these conditions, students of color were able to speak and be heard in their diversity classes.

Class size. Because of the importance of open discussion and feeling recognized and appreciated in diversity classes, students agreed that class size was also a crucial factor in creative positive experiences. As William noted, "The class is small and interactive, that was huge. That was really good, breaking it down smaller so everyone can speak." He said of smaller classes, "It's definitely a lot more comfortable. Your boundaries do open up and you do get more intimate with other people." Ethan appreciated the long discussions in class, saying, "It was a small enough class that we could do that." Grace realized, "I think the classes that I speak out most in are ones that are usually smaller." She said, "I love a small classroom. Dialogues are just so much more interesting and more people can be a part of them." The small classrooms that students appreciated often consisted of fewer than ten students. It seemed that when it came to class size, the smaller the better for diversity classes.

Just Another Class: Experiencing Neutral Multicultural Education

For the most part, students felt either positive or negative about their experiences with multicultural education. To leave a multicultural class feeling more or less neutral was a rare occurrence; in fact, a number of students expressed surprise and disbelief that this could take place. A few students, however, reported taking diversity classes that did not affect them significantly, in either a positive or negative way. As Kevin described his diversity class, "I didn't mind it. I didn't hate it. . . . [It was] just another class." Jason

also felt that his diversity class was not particularly different from his other classes: "I learned a lot of information that was sensitive or could be perceived to be sensitive, but I just took it as a class."

Jason's indifference to a diversity class was rooted in his view that personal experiences trump whatever he might encounter in a classroom. He said, "It was a class I put in my brain and I learned a little bit of stuff, but then I just moved on, because . . . my experiences in my life probably have more input into my daily life than just reading." Jason, in thinking about the class, said, "[It] didn't really hit me hard, like didn't hit my heart." He noted the class did not positively impact him because "I know where I come from, I like how I lived, I respect the way of life, so reading about things in books doesn't change my opinion."

Other students felt neutral about diversity classes that focused mainly on cultural content (without discussing racial inequalities), history, and lecture rather than discussion. As Melissa said, "In my [neutral class], I learned a lot about Native Americans, but I felt like that's all I learned. I learned a lot about their culture, but I wanted to analyze their experiences in America today." She explained, "I wanted a little more in-depth stuff." Daniel, similarly, said of a class he felt neutral about, "I wish there was more information to why government is not helping the Native Americans," reflecting his desire for a focus on injustice. Though Jason did not attribute his indifference to the lack of focus on power in his class, he did note that "[The professor] didn't say Native Americans are still oppressed today. I don't think he ever really made a strong statement like that." He said that he did enjoy a class on White guilt, noting, "I actually liked that one."

In addition to lacking a focus on race and power, students felt relatively neutral about classes in which open discussions did not take place. Ethan recalled a neutral class in which "the professor would lecture and no one was like, 'Oh, what about this or what about this?' No one was asking questions, so the professor would just lecture and there were assignments to see if you'd done the reading." William remembered he stopped paying attention in a class where "the people were kind of scared to voice their opinion in there. . . . It was like, teacher say, student read and do." Of note, both Jason and Kevin, who felt neutral about their experiences with multicultural classes, noticed that discussion seemed muted and restrained in their classes. Jason speculated that students didn't speak up much in his class because, "It's hard because you can never win in situations like this. Especially if you're too nice to someone, then you have White guilt; if you're too mean to them, you're racist. There's a little rope to walk on." Kevin also noted that his class was mostly lecture, saying, "There were discussions near the end of the semester, but nobody really said anything, probably because nobody knew their stuff." He said, "I can't tell whether it's because they don't know their material or if they just don't care or they're afraid to upset someone."

Though relatively rare, some diversity courses left students feeling relatively unaffected. Tellingly, students described these courses as lacking open discussion and not focused on hot issues such as racism, privilege, and power.

How Other Students Affect Multicultural Education

Though the professor was the most important factor in multicultural classes, the other students in their classes also had an impact on how students of color experienced

multicultural education. What kind of impact the other students had could be classified primarily by race. Students of color differed in how much they interacted with White students outside of the classroom, with some associating primarily with other students of color, and some with almost exclusively White friends. Regardless, taking a multicultural class brought tensions with White students to the surface. Conversely, even students who did not generally associate with other students of color found a measure of security and comfort in racially diverse classes. Students who had taken multicultural classes where most or all of the other students were of color were among those with the most positive experiences of multicultural education.

Interacting with White Students

Students of color described complicated, sometimes strained relationships with White students in their multicultural classes. As discussed, White students were often the source of negative experiences for students of color (though students of color ultimately held professors responsible for not rebutting inappropriate comments). Accordingly, students of color often felt uncomfortable discussing diversity issues with their White peers. In part, this discomfort was rooted in the sense that White students were not as engaged in the class. William recalled he valued his diversity class more than White students, saying "I just felt like a lot of the other students shortchanged themselves by not wanting or having the passion." He said, "Some people don't try to put forth the effort, and it's kind of frustrating." Lucy remembered how a professor showed interest in her cultural background, while "White students probably don't care." Daniel believed that "It's different for [White students] because they're in that class, the majority of them go

to the class . . . just in order to fulfill a diversity credit." Rosie commented on the difference in interest she noticed in the White students, "With me personally, I feel, I mean, it's my life. There are some people that have no idea that this is so influential. . . . They don't think about something like this every single day." Vicky said of what she learned, "I just think that it's more meaningful to me."

Students of color perceived White students as uncomfortable in classes that directly addressed White privilege and racism. As Ethan commented, "There's absolutely no incentive to engage in critical discussions about race. It makes people extraordinarily uncomfortable because they're so invested in the idea that we've overcome racism. Privilege is invisible, especially to members of the dominant culture." In fact, many students of color felt more discomfort in class out of sympathy for White students than for themselves. Hector stated, "I always felt more uncomfortable with the White kids in the class, because it felt like they were more uncomfortable." Lucy noted, "It's funny because I kind of get embarrassed and shy for the White students in my class." Rosie said, "The down spiral with having a dialogue about race is always I feel the tension with a lot of Whites in the class because it is almost like I feel bad for them when they leave." While she enjoyed being able to speak about her experiences, Rosie worried that White students would feel blamed:

> I think that's why I feel so bad when they leave. I'm just like, oh gosh, really take no offense. Nothing is wrong with you. But that's the point, nothing is wrong with you. You can change it. You can change what mainstream behavior Whites historically have had. You can make that so much better.

Some students expressed more ambivalence about empathizing with White students. Zoe stated, "I felt bad for the White people in the class because I was turning in my seat and I was like, oh, my gosh, imagine what they're going through! Especially the

White males." She paused. "No, just kidding." She paused again. "Well, really, though." William remembered that "a lot of male Caucasians came to me after class and they were saying . . . 'I kind of feel like a jerk for being an American.'" William felt that the reaction of these students was "remorseful" but also "resisting." He explained:

> They were really bitter about them being put in an awkward situation, and I was just like, well, I felt offended. Just because whatever they've gone through in that hour and a half or 50 minutes it's like, people of color, they went through that all the time.

William recalled saying to these students, "Dude, *we* go through this every day!"

Some students of color felt that diversity classes enabled them see the extent of the naiveté or even racism of their peers. Ethan noted:

> It's been my experience that sometimes Caucasian students think everything applies across the board, and if you really look critically at a lot of these policies and a lot of these structures, they are really systematically built to keep privilege where it is. And I don't think they realize that. They seem to think that racism is just a personal flaw and not part of the bigger picture.

Kevin was also struck by how White students didn't seem able to grasp their privilege, noting he's heard White students say, "You don't have to take the privileges away from White people, you just have to give them to those that lack privileges," He noted, "I think that's a really common response because they think the resources in the world are unlimited." Cordelia remembered a discussion about a movie in which a White police officer shoots a Black police officer: "It seemed to me . . . it was because he was Black, and it seemed like nobody else knew that; and they were like, well, this or that, and it seemed like everybody would always justify why there was an oppression."

Perhaps precisely because White students tended to be less engaged and more naïve about race and racism, even well-taught diversity classes seemed designed for White students rather than for students of color. Grace said of a diversity class, "It was

really like a 101, it was like an introduction to inequity." She noted, "I wanted to be more challenged. But I really felt like it was catering to students who were just barely coming into this and who had never thought about it." Grace felt skeptical that she could take a diversity class that felt designed for her: "I feel like I would really, really like a class that does not center on Whiteness, and I feel like I don't know if there will ever be a way for me to experience that." Kevin remembered, of assignments and readings in his class, "The professor just assumed that most of the students could write from their own point of view, like, I'm White, this is what I think." He noted, "A lot of the things are assuming that the student is White, so that's just one thing that means more work for me." Kevin felt that, in general, his diversity class "was mainly geared toward White students." Even though Hector stated that he enjoyed his diversity class and learned a lot from that experience, he felt, "In essence, when you break it down, I would say White students do learn more than a minority" in diversity classes.

One thing that students learned from their White peers was how they and their cultures were perceived. Hector stated that what he took the most from his classes wasn't "textbook information" but "more of what other students thought of your culture." Jason remembered, "It was just interesting to hear perceptions from people who haven't lived on reservations. . . . It was just like amazing to me to see perceptions of reservations and the way Native Americans live." Lucy felt disheartened by an exercise which revealed how easily White students were able to access negative stereotypes about other racial groups, noting, "It was just a little shocking, like wow." Ethan stated of White students, "For the most part, they really love to romanticize [American Indians]. I mean, they don't look at us in a modern context, which I think is really quite remarkable." Ethan, who also

has White ancestry, stated, “Before I came here to this school, I had never really considered myself a different race. But now I see that . . . that’s what people see.” He stated of his classmates, “They were like, ‘The only Indians I’ve seen are drunks, so when I see you, it’s really quite strange.’” Sandra felt shocked by the hatred one student expressed towards her, “I had never seen . . . a person like in real life, sitting right next to me, with this hatred towards a people, a group of people, and [I am] part of that group.”

On the other hand, students of color expressed appreciation towards White students who were honest, open, and willing to learn about race. Rosie remembered reacting to a White student who admitted she never thought about race: “I was like, how honest is that? That is [more] highly respectable than someone who’s like, oh, I think about it all the time.” Grace enjoyed a class in which White students “weren’t openly hostile when students of color spoke. That was great.” Hector felt his experiences were valued by White students because “you can give them real-world experience and they’re really encaptured into what you’re saying.” Zoe enjoyed speaking with White students who sought out her opinions, saying “I think they were as curious to talk to me as I was to them.”

Interacting with Other Students of Color

Students of color faced potential hostility and invalidation, often from White students, when they entered a multicultural classroom. Many times, students of color sought refuge together, seeking safety and support. In diversity classes, however, students of color also learned about ways in which they are different from each other and became more aware of their own prejudices.

Many students of color described looking for other non-White students when entering a classroom. Zoe remembered entering her diversity class and thinking, "Wow! There's a lot of minorities in here!" Grace described, "I always take an inventory of how many people of color are in a classroom." She described her ease when surrounded by other students of color, "We validate each other automatically." Brianna described her reaction on entering her diversity class, "I'm not going to lie, I was so happy when I see three other Black folks in the class, because it's the first time [I've] ever seen this many Black folks in my same class." She explained, "It just feels good because there's not too many of us on campus, so it's always great to just see a face that you can relate to. . . . You're not the only one." Lucy also stated that, when seeing other students of color, "It's like a relief! It's like, oh, good, I'm not the only student of color in here. You feel like you have allies." Zoe explained how she felt more comfortable in classes with students of color because "the pressure was disbursed between us." Zoe noted that students of color often feel bonded in class: "You kind of have that secret relationship of, like, hey, I'm going through this, too. We're in it together."

On the most basic level, this connection led many students of color to sit together in diversity classes. As Lucy said, "I always look around and I look for that one [student of color]." She elaborated, "We understand each other. We're both here in an institution of higher education with all White students, predominantly White students, so you already can relate on that level." Melissa also stated that when she walks into a class, "The first thing I do is I look for people that look like me and I sit by them." She said of two other students of color in her class, "We'd always have to sit together because we felt empowered, I guess, to sit together. It was easier. We had more similar experiences." Zoe

noticed that she sat with other Black girls even without trying to consciously, saying, “It was funny, though, us four Black girls somehow always sat next to each other, in the same general vicinity. It was always funny. And at the end of the class, I just didn’t even realize it and I thought hey, I wonder if this was planned.”

Supporting each other. One of the benefits of sitting together was that students of color could talk to each other easily, sometimes carrying on side conversations during class to relieve their feelings, often meeting after class to debrief. As Jason said, “I sometimes would eat breakfast with [the other student of color in my class] afterwards and we’d talk about stuff and just state our opinions . . . what did you think about that and whether we liked it or disliked it.” Arturo recalled how he became friends with another student of color because “we just started talking more after class.” Hector remembered sitting by a student of color who would express her outrage at offensive remarks in class in side conversations to him: “She would say it to me, but she wouldn’t say it to anybody else or any of the White students.” He said, “Whenever she sat next to me and she was frustrated about something that was said . . . she would look like, oh, I can’t believe that, and she would look at me and be like, ‘Can you believe that?’” Melissa remembered conducting side conversation in her class as well with other students of color, “Sometimes, because we sat together . . . every once in a while we’d snicker or I’d say a comment to my friend and then the professor would actually call us out and be like, ‘Did you guys have something to say?’” For students who did not feel able to speak to the professor and to the class at large, conversations with other students of color in class served as a way to speak and express themselves in a safer and more supportive environment.

Furthermore, the support of other students of color often provided a measure of security and safety when speaking up to the class in general. William said, "It's huge. Huge! Because [other students of color] get your back. . . . You don't want to be in there by yourself because you're going against the grain." Arturo noted that, with multiple students of color in a class, "It was more validating. It's not as easy to tokenize, when you have all these different perspectives." The reassurance of knowing that others will validate their experiences helped students of color speak with more authority. Cordelia said:

> It always helps to have other minorities because it seems like you're not the only one with that experience. When you're talking about your experience, somebody else will chime in and say, "That happened to me, too," so that when somebody, like a White student or somebody who hasn't experienced it, they can't just assume it's just happened to you. They can't just brush it off as one individual experience.

Students of color could share the burden of expressing their experiences in the class. William, for example, noted that students of color could take turns speaking up. He recalled an instance where he backed up a Latina student who objected to a White student referring to herself as "normal" because she was Caucasian. He remembered how this Latina student then supported William when he stated his dislike of being asked where he was from. He said, "Latina girls in that class supported me in that, and I supported them in that." Zoe stated that she spoke up in class more frequently because with "more minorities in the class, it definitely felt more comfortable and a safer learning and sharing environment. . . . It's nice and a luxury that I don't often get." She described a mutually supportive relationship with other students of color in speaking out: "If I wasn't the one giving the comment, then I was the one supporting another comment."

Recognizing differences. At the same time, conversing with other students of color in diversity classes proved eye-opening for some students who recognized many differences between and within groups. As Sandra said:

> Whenever I saw a Latino person, I thought I could go over and talk to them and tell them, "Hey, oh, my gosh, I had such a stressful day." . . . One huge thing that I learned was . . . because they look like me doesn't mean that they think like me.

William appreciated a class in which many of the students were also American Indian, but realized that even within the American Indian community he felt isolated, because, "I always talked about returning to the reservation. . . . No one really had that in their future, so it was hard." William believed that more attention should be paid to discrimination within groups, saying, "It's my belief is that your own people are the hardest people on you." Brianna, while she liked to see other Black students in her classes, said, "But then also, when you're in class and, say, okay, you see another Black person, it doesn't necessarily mean that they may know the culture."

Some students of color also objected to what they viewed as racism or overemphasis on race within their own groups. Kevin said, "I've seen other Asian Americans thinking, like, maybe their abilities are inborn because they're Asian American or maybe their performance is better because of something in their culture, so that just stuck out to me as racist." Jason said of some of his friends, "They use the minority card, which is weird to say, because if I was not a minority, that would sound racist. But I hate when my friends will say stupid things like, 'Oh, we're set up to fail.'"

Other students of color commented on the differences they noted in how racial groups are viewed by each other. Grace recalled an incident in which a student of color made a comment about the 1992 Los Angeles riots, saying "He was talking about how

. . . he lived in L.A., and how he saw the fires burn and how he was celebrating it." She said, "I get emotional thinking about it because my family was affected by [the riots]. So for him to celebrate that, it really disgusted me." Grace felt saddened by the rift this showed between different people of color, saying "I think what makes me really angry about that is that the experiences of Korean Americans are really tamped down and it becomes a Black/White issue or a Black/Latino/White issue. . . . I feel that certain ethnic groups are seen as more meaty or seen as having a priority."

Students of color were also able to recognize their own privileges and prejudices in diversity classes. Arturo stated, "[The class] makes me think of the privileges that I hold and that I sometimes take for granted." Hector, who was very aware of White students looking to him for answers, realized that he was doing the same thing to other students. He remembered a lecture about lynching in which "we did have an African American kid in there, so instead of looking at me, everyone looked at him to be, like, oh, are you okay with that? . . . What's interesting at the same time, I found myself looking at him to say, oh, are you okay with that?"

Like White students, students of color benefited from learning about groups and experiences other than their own. Tiffany said, "It's a chance once I got to hear other people's stories. . . . It helps you understand that other people have complex lives as well." Arturo described learning about the struggles of other groups: "There are so many other communities that face, I wouldn't say similar issues, because, I mean, we come from different backgrounds and we're affected differently, but in the end, it's social injustice." He said, "There's this unifying piece to what happens to people in terms of marginalization." Zoe stated, "Because of that class, I know more about Mexicans and

how they immigrate and why they do it, and why they're so oppressed now, and I feel like I have more sympathy for them because I understand more." Hector realized he was better able to relate to people from other cultures "because I'd taken these classes, I was able to understand more why they would do certain things, and I wasn't quick to judge them for that."

Wanting more diversity. Students of color longed for the company of more students of color in their diversity classes. In addition to increasing comfort, students believed that having more students of color would enrich discussions in diversity classes. Hector said:

> One thing I would like to see is more culturally diverse students in those classes . . . because that way the discussions could be spread across evenly, even within their own cultures you could have a debate about, like, two Hispanics coming from completely different backgrounds.

Ethan believed that having more students of color in a class would lead to better conversations about "privilege and oppression and power." William wished for more students who shared his specific cultural background, noting, "I always had other people of a different race back me up, but I would kill to have anyone from a reservation to be in my class to back me up."

Classes for Students of Color

Though most students of color took diversity classes populated mainly by White students, a few students of color had the opportunity to take diversity classes which were predominantly or exclusively non-White. Overall, their experiences in these classes highlight the importance of classroom composition in creating a space for discussion and

exploration. Students of color expressed their sense of freedom and community in these classes. For many students of color, these classes felt like home.

When no White students were present, students of color felt at ease to speak their minds without fear of attack. Ethan said, "Had, maybe, a Caucasian student been in there, I would've been a little anxious at times, just afraid that it would make it an offensive environment." Lucy stated, "Because we're all students of color, we say some things you wouldn't say in front of a White student. . . . We're just on a level where we get each other." Melissa described the difference between classes with and without White students by saying "I've been in classes where there's maybe one or two White students and I can't really speak my mind because either I don't want to offend directly or indirectly or I don't want to share something that would be too personal."

The defining characteristic of classes in which all or most of the students were of color, for many students, was a sense that their experiences would be validated. Melissa remembered how in a class she took for students of color, "We never had enough time because everybody wanted to participate and everybody was respectful." For her, the contrast between the class of students of color and another diversity class she took at the same time, taught by a White professor and composed of mostly White students, was stark. She remembered how she used one class to process her negative experiences in the other: "I'd have experiences in [the White dominant class] and then me and my friends would go back to [the class for students of color] and be like, 'Okay, this is what happened,' and we'd talk through it and analyze." Arturo enjoyed the sense that students appreciated and respected difference in classes that were mostly students were of color: "We all come from different places, and when you're a minority you realize that pretty

fast and pretty quickly and you learn from each other. It becomes this different dynamic when I'm in a class where the majority is White and we're speaking about heavy issues and here I am by myself."

With barriers to open expression removed, students felt they could delve deeper and go further in their exploration of issues. William noted in his class, "It was almost like every time they said something and every time I said something, it seemed like there was a commonality there, a level of understanding." Ethan said, "There was already an understanding of things like privilege and oppression in very critical terms, not just very superficial." He said that when topics related to race and power were discussed, "No one had to stop and be like, whoa." Because of the level of shared knowledge and understanding already in place, "we were just able to, you know, eat up the material."

For many students of color, taking a class with other students of color altered not only how they felt about diversity classes but about their education in general. Arturo stated that having mostly students of color in a diversity class "definitely made the class." Cordelia said, "Those classes had a large minority in them, which might have changed the way I felt about those classes. . . . It was easier to discuss things and evaluate situations and to share our experiences." Brianna, recalling her class for students of color, said:

> Still to this day that is my favorite class throughout my college life. . . . It just felt like home, and that class I definitely spoke out in. . . . You're in a class with all these students that have been through something in relation to what you've been through. . . . There's nothing better than that, especially to have a whole class full of minorities, that's hot! That's just hot to me.

Wanting More: Criticisms and Suggestions

Many students described their experiences of multicultural education as transformative. Some of those same students, however, wanted more from their diversity classes. Students, especially those who had taken many multicultural classes, wanted more depth and solutions. They wanted to continue conversations begun in diversity classes and to apply what they learned to their lives. Most students felt that diversity needed to be a greater part of the curriculum as a whole rather than limited to a few classes.

Wanting More Depth

Some students who had taken many diversity classes began to feel frustrated with the repetitiveness of those classes. Grace noted she has been assigned the same articles to read multiple times: "I just learn the same things over and over and over. You read the same people and it's just like, there has to be more. So I feel like it's so limiting and I feel like students of color are really, really limited here." A couple students noted that they were able to use the same materials for different classes because of the overlap, such as Kevin who stated, "A lot of it is old stuff, just stuff that I've been taught before, and I put it somewhere else. I put it aside and whenever somebody brings it up again, I get out my references and answer their questions and leave." Melissa grew tired of studying similar topics: "It's kind of exhausting because we talk about the same thing over and over." She said that, in some classes, she did not have to complete any of the reading assignments because she had read all the material already. The assignments also felt similar: "I've written the same paper, like, most of my papers are the same."

Students also expressed frustration that more was not expected in some diversity classes. Cordelia noted the common introduction on the first day of a diversity class in which "the professor will say, 'I'm not here to change your mind, because you're going to keep your own ideas, but I just want you to know.' It's like, okay, aren't you trying to make them change their minds, to try to make them see what's going on?" She said, "I've been very fortunate to take a diversity requirement that was so profound, and I think that it's a very sad thing to see people leave and not really have that change." Grace objected to the watering down of the diversity requirement (through, for example, the menu approach instituted by the university), which led her to wonder if "it's just for PR, it's just to make the University look like we are invested in diversity, when they're not." She worried:

> The word diversity, it's losing its meaning and it's just like a buzzword, nobody really cares about what it means, or it's a word that White people use in order to engage issues that are not their own, really. So I feel like diversity at this point is kind of a joke.

Grace reported many of her friends felt similarly disillusioned, saying "I feel like there is an underlying, I don't know if it's an anger or animosity towards this idea of diversity."

Wanting More Conversation

Some students noted that having these dialogues, only to have nowhere to continue the dialogue once the class ended, left them feeling isolated and alone. Arturo, reflecting on his minority status, said, "That just creates like this distinct space for me. . . . It's very lonely. I don't find a lot of people that I relate to completely." Ethan said, "To have more knowledge, I think it makes me more aware of myself. There aren't a lot of people I can really talk to, so I guess, I wonder how that really benefits me. I'm feeling

more alone." He noted, "I have a lot of White male friends that I really couldn't talk to them about any of this." He concluded, "I guess being more educated on a subject doesn't make you happier."

Many students felt multicultural education should begin earlier than college. Kevin said:

> In my opinion, all people who teach should be experts at this kind of stuff, and not only in college, but it should happen in elementary school. So I feel like, in college a lot of these multicultural education classes, they are just cleaning up the mess they should have taken care of [before].

Rosie similarly commented, "The majority of [students of color] won't go and get that higher education. They won't ever have those experiences to talk about this kind of stuff. They won't ever get to that point. And I think it's a travesty." She believed that diversity classes should be taught in grade school, "because that's where you're being invalidated." Vicky said of her diversity class, "I don't know why I didn't have this class earlier, early on in life." She noted that race should be discussed at younger ages because "I think that kids, that people will be more willing to talk about it."

In college, students wanted more multicultural classes and wanted multiculturalism and diversity to infuse the curriculum rather than being confined to a single requirement. As Arturo said, "I don't know if . . . a three-credit class is enough, or even appropriate." He noted that, when diversity is only discussed in one class, "that information becomes tokenizing; therefore, it's not taken seriously or people create bitterness towards it." He believed that the diversity requirement was not working because "one class out of the whole academic experience . . . it's better than nothing, but could more be done? Definitely." Arturo advocated for a more radical overhaul of the curriculum, saying, "I think if a school or an institution was serious about social justice, I

think their entire curriculum would be a result of that. . . . It would just be completely embedded and intertwined into everything." As Kevin stated, "Everywhere there is education, all education should be multicultural."

With the current requirement of a single diversity class, students of color worried that White students would mistakenly believe that what they had learned in that class constituted a thorough understanding of multicultural issues. Lucy said, "I think some people take advantage of it. . . . They would say, 'I understand because I took this class.' And it's like, okay, no, that's just one class you took. You don't understand. You don't." Arturo said, "When you talk about things in such a small way, then it's easier to make light of it, and then it's easier to forget about it and it's easier to say, to not take it seriously, to say, 'Oh, you're being oversensitive,' or, 'Yeah, I learned about it,' and it's okay."

Wanting Solutions

Most of all, students felt frustrated by the lack of solutions offered by diversity classes. Cordelia said:

> It's like a constant loop of we're in power and now we're going to oppress you, so now we're in power and we're going to oppress you, so it was hard for me to listen to a lot of it. Because, okay, I understand that this is part of history and we should know it, but . . . also, how do we change it?

Similarly, Grace asked, "Now we all recognize that you have been discriminated against, so what do we do about it now?" Ethan wondered of his diversity class, "I wonder how useful any of this will be." Arturo suggested that classes should figure out ways to make knowledge about race and power applicable, such as by instituting experiential learning

in which students would engage in community activism as "a very positive way, not just to learn it, but to embrace it, embrace the knowledge."

A Good First Step: Supporting Multicultural Education

Despite criticisms, every student of color who participated in the study agreed on the need for diversity classes in college that focus on issues of race. They believed that diversity classes were necessary to accurately reflect the world at large and to provide students with essential tools for critical thinking. The most optimistic of the students believed that diversity classes would engage people to work towards equality.

Many students commented on the reality of an increasingly diverse society and the necessity to accurately represent that society. As Ethan said, "Our whole nation is changing and will continue to change." He hoped diversity classes would make students "better equipped to understand the world." Vicky said, "It's important to learn about all other diversity backgrounds and cultures, and it gives you a better perspective of how their upbringing was in the world, in this country, and to just get insight." Hector stated the classes were necessary "because there's a lot of different people out there . . . as well as huge cultural barriers, so that's why I think the classes are offered and I think it's very important that they require you to take it." As he explained, "Education is very important, and I think everyone should learn as much as they can about other people and other cultures so they can fully function in a society, especially in the United State of America."

Many students hoped that diversity classes would lead students to think more critically by presenting different perspectives. Arturo stated that, ideally, diversity classes

would "engage students into thinking in different ways and seeing other pieces." Some students believed that diversity classes would engage people in anti-racism work, such as Sandra, who noted, "I feel like we've gained a lot of White allies through these courses." Zoe said, "Even if you don't agree with everything that her class teaches, at least it makes you more aware." She hoped, "The more people learn and accept, not tolerate, *accept* different races, the better off even, I'll daresay, the nation will be, because there will hopefully be less discrimination and racism." Kevin remarked that college graduates would hold privilege, and said that diversity classes were necessary because "when the students gain power, they need to use it correctly." He explained that diversity classes could prevent "students who gain power in the future from abusing their power to oppress the oppressed even further." Students agreed with Vicky, who said of diversity issues, "I think everyone should know about it . . . because I think if you don't take a class like this, people are missing out." Rosie summed up the students' hopes for how diversity classes could influence people: "Just be enlightened. I just think [the classes will create] a better understanding and hopefully a better world."

Overall, students of color placed tremendous value on diversity classes for themselves. Zoe said, "Ignoring race is so, I don't even know how to say, just so nonfunctional. . . . We have to acknowledge that there is race." Melissa said of diversity classes, "Without it, I don't know. I don't know what I'd study." Even when students had negative experiences, they still valued and supported the existence of multicultural classes. Grace said, "I think the experience that I get from them is invaluable. I learn so much from being challenged by other students and challenging myself to put myself out there." She noted, "Most of my experiences are pretty negative, but at the same time,

those experiences totally validate my life." Though she noted that education has a long way to go to truly embrace multiculturalism, she said, "I think it is a really good first step." William said, "I feel more comfortable. I enjoyed going to those classes. Sometimes I don't enjoy going to, like, biology or math or whatever, but I enjoyed going to those classes." He said, "If it wasn't for these classes, it would be kind of hard." He concluded:

> I think the negative experiences come from society just . . . not wanting to hear. But the ones that do hear, I think it will benefit them in the long run. . . . And those that don't want to hear, I think it's only a matter of time before they start wanting to hear.

How Students of Color Experience Multicultural Education: A Theoretical Model

In order to explain how students of color experienced multicultural education, I created a theoretical framework consisting of two underlying themes. The first theme is that race is unspoken. The second, that knowledge about race has a personal basis. From these two themes, I sought to explain why students experience multicultural education in the ways that they do. I described why and how students have developed strategies for managing multicultural education. I explored what characterizes negative and positive experiences of multicultural education. To conclude this section, I will expand upon this theoretical framework, describing the links between the themes and exploring their explanatory potential.

Living Unspoken Lives

The first, and most important, theme that emerged from this study is the idea that race is unspoken. By no means did race necessarily constitute the majority or the most important part of students' identities. Race, however, held a peculiar status in students' lives because, though important, it was nearly impossible to name and discuss its importance. This tension between what was known or felt and what could be said was woven into the fabric of students' lives. They, like other people of color, had become accustomed to living with a very large elephant in the room. This elephant was very much present in every classroom students entered, whether or not the class dealt explicitly with race and diversity.

Understanding the unspoken nature of race became the key that unlocked many aspects of what students experienced. The tension of the unspoken explained why so many students of color had developed strategies for managing multicultural issues when they arose in the classroom. On one hand, students knew that many did not want to hear about their experiences of race. They knew they would not be heard, or that they would be punished for speaking. Many felt they did not have the language to describe their experiences. On the other hand, students yearned for an opportunity to speak, to be recognized, to express themselves, to be heard. Students were caught between forces pulling them in opposite directions: societal pressure not to speak about race, and the basic human desire for acknowledgement and connection. Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that so many students expend so much time and energy deciding when and how to speak, or that some simply decide to check out. It is also not surprising that students are exhausted by this process.

The idea that race is unspoken led to a simple way to distinguish between negative and positive experiences of multicultural education. To answer the question of whether a multicultural class was negative or positive for students of color, I simply had to ask: Could students of color speak? In negative experiences, students of color could not speak. This could occur for many reasons, including that students of color were invalidated, stereotyped, or confronted with the apathy of their peers (and sometimes of their professors). These negative experiences were prevalent in classes not focused on multicultural issues, and not uncommon in specifically multicultural classes. In positive multicultural experiences, students of color spoke and were heard. Importantly, students of color learned how to speak about race, to name their experiences.

What is unspoken about race? For students, the answer was clear: inequality. Though cultural content and historical information were not without value, the story about race was the story of privilege and oppression. Classes that did not address power differences missed the point entirely for students of color. The importance of power in understanding race may help explain why race is so difficult to discuss. For students of color, coming to terms with racial oppression could be painful and overwhelming. Having their experiences of oppression invalidated was like acid poured over wounds. The support of the professor was vital in helping many students feel comfortable making themselves vulnerable by speaking out.

Positive experiences of multicultural education, in which students' experiences of racism were validated, led many students to feel more proud and confident, and more engaged with school and with their communities. Though some felt anger as their eyes

were opened to injustice, others felt forgiving as they understood that imbalances in power had historical and societal roots larger than any one person.

When asked for feedback, students uniformly agreed on the difficulty of speaking about race and the importance of discussing privilege and oppression. Though not all students described managing themselves in relation to conversation about race, the most outspoken students recognized that their ability to speak openly and without hesitation was unique. For most students, the experience of being able to speak out about race and ethnicity in a safe environment was rare. That experience alone demonstrated the value of positive multicultural education.

Living Race

The other theme that emerged in this study is that knowledge about race is personal. This theme applied on more than one level. Fundamentally, students of color experienced classes about race as classes about themselves, their lives, and their communities. This gave multicultural classes an urgency and intensity not present in other classes. The personal nature of these classes helped explain why they could influence students profoundly, with the potential to inflict pain or uplift. That discussions about race could easily become emotional and heated, due to their personal nature, also helped explain why so many people, including professors, preferred to avoid the topic altogether. Professors who could make these intense discussions comfortable were greatly valued.

On another level, the personal nature of race knowledge underpinned students' preferences for classes about race. Because race is such a personal topic, students of color

wanted to feel acknowledged and valued in class. They appreciated professors who were willing to self-disclose and who had personal experiences with racism. Though most preferred professors of color for diversity classes, what seemed most important was the professor had a deep understanding of racial privilege and oppression, grounded in some kind of personal experience. They believed that teaching strategies must be interactive and that professors must go beyond reading and lecturing to impart knowledge. Of note, they considered discussion to be the essential core of a successful multicultural class. Some students noticed that they valued personal experiences and stories more than their White peers.

Most students agreed that knowledge about race has a personal nature. I chose to maintain this theme though a few students wanted to emphasize that personal experience in and of itself did not equal knowledge. Some students were concerned that emphasizing the personal nature of knowledge about race could reinforce the misperception that all people of color are experts on race, simply by virtue of their background. Students also worried that White people might believe that they could never understand the experiences of people of color, further distancing the two groups and reducing motivation to engage to dialogues about race. I share these concerns.

For me, however, the explanatory power of highlighting how often students compared knowledge gleaned from books unfavorably to knowledge from personal experience was compelling. This theme helped highlight the ways in which teaching about race is different from teaching about most other subjects in a collegiate curriculum. The stakes are higher for students of color because of how inextricably race is a part of their lives. This theme also elucidates why the traditional classroom, with its emphasis on

lecture and reading, fails to impart a deep understanding of race and race-related concerns.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that how students experience multicultural education is largely shaped by the culture of silence surrounding race and racism. Students have grown accustomed to not being able to speak, or not being heard, about their race-related experiences. They have learned to manage themselves around multicultural education through constant assessment of when and how they should speak. Their negative multicultural experiences extend this experience; their positive multicultural experiences upend it. In positive multicultural classes, led by professors who were direct and open in confronting race and racism, students of color could speak out about their lives and be heard. Their experiences provide a testament to both the limits and the power of education.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

In this study, I investigated how students of color experienced multicultural education. I asked about students' positive and negative experiences with multicultural education and what characterized those experiences. I sought to discover what students of color think of multicultural education and how they feel that multicultural education has impacted their lives. Through my conversations with students of color, I found that their experiences with multicultural education varied enormously. Some multicultural classes felt like a prolonged magnification of the negative experiences to which they were accustomed when it comes to education about race and ethnicity. On the other hand, some classes felt like a refuge, a place where students of color felt recognized and validated. Though other students played a role, students agreed that the expertise of the professor, especially in leading open and respectful discussions about race and power, was the determining factor in their experiences of multicultural classes. Students craved opportunities to speak about race and to receive acknowledgement of their lived experiences.

In this chapter, I will revisit the research questions that drove this study, considering how the results address these questions as well as contextualizing the results within the existing literature. I will also briefly revisit models of multicultural education

to consider how they are illuminated by the results of the study before considering limitations and implications for research, practice, policy, and social justice.

The Experience of Multicultural Education

At the most basic level, this study asked how students of color experience multicultural education. One of the main findings was that the experience of students of color was strongly influenced by the difficulty of speaking about race. The enormous difficulty of speaking about race, in general as well as specifically in the classroom, has been documented in the literature on students of color in higher education (Harper and Hurtado, 2007; Levine & Cureton, 1998b; Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, & Lin, 2009; Tatum, 1997; Tusmith & Reddy, 2002). Study participants commented both on this difficulty and on the burden of remaining silent on matters of race and ethnicity. As research has previously found, the absence of discussion about race has led Whiteness to be normalized and students of color to be marginalized in college classrooms (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Quaye, 2009). Harper and Hurtado (2007) detailed the frustration of students at the lack of cross-cultural dialogue on campus, and participants in this study likewise yearned for open conversations about race. For this study, the overwhelming silence in education on race and ethnicity and the desire of students to end this silence provided the keys to understanding how students of color experience multicultural education. Though not originally intended as such, this study lent credence to the centrality in CRT of giving voice to people of color as a means of emancipation (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995; Fernández, 2002).

That most students of color do not feel comfortable speaking about race has been suggested by Jackson's (1999) exploration of psychology graduate students in

multicultural classes, in which students of color noted that they feared exposure, threats, and attacks in response to voicing their beliefs. Similarly, Lenington (1999) found that psychology graduate students felt less safe and less able to share than their White peers. This study extended those findings to undergraduate students in a variety of fields of study, most of whom had similar fears and reservations. Smith et al. (2007) have described the prevalence of racial battle fatigue among African American males at PWIs, due to dealing with an atmosphere of racism and racial oppression. Study participants likewise described symptoms of racial battle fatigue: In this study, those symptoms were caused at least in part by negative experiences with multicultural education.

In response to feeling unsafe in the classroom, a number of students in this study described "checking out," withdrawing by not attending classes, refusing to participate in classroom discussions, or doing the minimum amount of work necessary to receive a desired grade. Jackson (1999) described how graduate students withdrew from multicultural classes to manage their fears. My interpretation of these concerns differed drastically from Jackson's, however, as Jackson focused on internal barriers to education and suggested that instructors need to correct the subjective fears of their students. Instead, I found that students were justified in their fears. Study participants, like those in studies by Quaye (2009), Tatum (2003), and Watson (2002), stated that they withdraw in part in order to avoid appearing too emotional or losing self-control in the classroom. Some, like those described in Tatum, remained silent in order to avoid contributing to stereotypes about their racial or ethnic group. This study expanded upon the reasons why students of color may decide to remain silent or avoid classes that address multicultural issues. Some students simply wanted to avoid attention or did not want to appear like

know-it-alls who dominated the class. Others saved their reactions and comments for outlets where they could feel more free to speak openly, such as in conversation with family and friends.

This study further illuminated the process that students go through in deciding how and when to speak. Of note was the sheer amount of time and energy many students of color expended in managing their participation in multicultural classes. A number of students stated that they frequently felt regret about their choices, whether they decided to speak up or remain silent, and often ruminated on things that were said or not said during classroom discussions about race. A couple students identified moving through stages in which their participation in multicultural discussions waxed and waned. The in-depth qualitative interviews with students likely elicited this level of detail about this aspect of how they experience multicultural education. Using CRT also likely helped direct the focus of these interviews to how students decide to use their voice.

In addition, this study shed light upon the flip side of checking out: students of color who spoke out, regardless of setting. Such students are not often described in the literature, perhaps because they do not appear to require as much support or concern as silent students. These students stated that they spoke out because of their unusual self-confidence, disregard for others' opinions, or just being "outspoken." These students appeared to experience little to no distress in relation to their participation in multicultural classes (though this did not mean that they had no criticisms of the classes themselves). Other students who decided to speak out, however, described paying a price for their participation. For example, a few students described consciously choosing not to be angry. Others accepted the role of spokesperson in their class, in order to facilitate

understanding and hopefully make things easier for future generations. One student stated that she spoke out of a principled desire to put what she viewed as truth into the world, though skeptical of changing anyone's opinion. These students commonly described speaking out despite significant discomfort, forcing themselves to tolerate negative emotions to do what they believed was right. Their experiences help provide a more nuanced picture of what students of color endure in order to add their voices to multicultural conversations.

The literature on the experiences of students of color in higher education has revealed how difficult it is for students of color to speak openly about race and ethnicity. This study highlighted the silence on race and how students have learned to cope with that silence. Silence and speaking out formed the foundation of students' of color experiences of multicultural education.

Positive and Negative Experiences

This study also asked students to describe their positive and negative experiences of multicultural education and what factors characterized these experiences. Students reflected on the relevance of peer interactions, professors, course content, and their personal knowledge of race and its impact on pedagogy. In addition, a few noted neutral experiences of multicultural education.

Negative Experiences

In describing the negative experiences of students of color in multicultural education, most of what this study found was congruent with the previous literature on the challenges students of color face in higher education. Negative multicultural

education experiences seemed to be composed primarily of a repetition or amplification of other negative classroom experiences.

Participants described their negative experiences of multicultural education as characterized by stereotypes, heightened attention, inappropriate expectations, and negative messages. Likewise, other studies have noted that students of color face stereotypes in the classroom (Ancis et al., 2000), expectations that they serve as spokespersons for their racial or ethnic groups (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Watson, 2002), and microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). As in other studies, instructors sometimes made racist statements but more frequently allowed other students in the classroom to make derogatory remarks unchallenged (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Hurtado, 2002). Students' descriptions of discussions on affirmative action, which often made students of color feel demeaned and unwelcome, were also consistent with what other studies have found (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Chang & Witt-Sandis, 1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Watson, 2002). By describing how they felt unwelcome in their own classrooms and the sheer amount of time and energy they spent processing negative experiences, participants in this study also provided support for Pierce's (1995) model of racial oppression as control of space, time, energy and motion (STEM).

Positive Experiences

This study provided a sketch of what it feels like for students of color to have positive experiences of multicultural education, which has received less attention in the literature. Students in this study expressed relief and a sense of comfort about being able

to speak out about their experiences and identities. Many even enjoyed the discomfort and awkwardness of discussing difficult topics related to race and power. Students who had positive experiences of multicultural education felt that their classes were meaningful in a way they had not experienced before, connectedly intimately to their personal lives, and especially useful and applicable. They appreciated the opportunity to correct misperceptions about themselves. For some, positive multicultural education felt cathartic. Through their experiences, students could reclaim their STEM (space, time, energy, motion) that had been so often controlled by others (Pierce, 1995). These experiences provide a glimpse into the potential of multicultural education to support students of color and even to improve their lives.

Impact of Peer Interactions

A number of studies have addressed the interaction of students of color with their peers. For example, students of color in a previous survey noted that White students do not seem to be interested in multicultural issues (Levine & Cureton, 1998a) or seem interested only in superficial discussions about race (Watson, 2002; Chesler et al., 2005). Students of color in this study also observed that White students seemed apathetic about multicultural issues. In addition, many students in this study commented on the naiveté of White students and the discomfort of direct exposure to their derogatory comments. Some students of color, on the other hand, appreciated White students who were honest and willing to learn.

Other studies addressed interaction with peers without differentiating between White peers and peers of color. Lenington's (1999) study of graduate students

specifically identified fear of the reaction from other students as the reason students of color were reluctant to share in multicultural classes. Students of color also stated that the apathy and lack of interest of other students were the most common barriers to learning. In Coleman's (2006) study, far fewer students of color, in comparison to White students, described interaction with peers as positive in a multicultural course. In Laird's (2005) study, however, students of color were more likely to report *both* positive and negative interactions with peers than White students. The seeming contradiction of this result may be explained by the current study's finding that students of color interact in drastically different ways with White peers and with peers of color. Accounting for the backgrounds of the students involved may help clarify the literature on peer interactions in diversity classes.

The phenomenon of students of color congregating in educational settings has been well-documented (Tatum, 1997; Villalpando, 2003). The literature is relatively sparse on the interactions of students of color with each other in the classroom, however. Jackson (1999) speculated that students within a shared ethnic group may experience struggle. This speculation received some support from participants in the current study who stated that multicultural classes had helped them recognize within-group differences, as well as differences among various groups of color. The primary finding of this study was that students of color provided vital support for each other in multicultural classes. Students of color looked for each other, gained confidence to speak out from their mutual support, and shared the burdens of heightened attentions and expectations. Some found outlets for thoughts and feelings that they otherwise did not feel comfortable expressing

when they took part in side conversations with other students of color or in conversations after class.

Importance of the Professor

Participants in the current study clearly stated that the professor was the primary factor in whether their experience of multicultural education was positive or negative. Many researchers have suggested that teaching diversity classes requires highly specialized skills (Chesler et al., 2005; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009; Tusmith & Reddy, 2002; Watson, 2002). Boysen et al. (2009) found that undergraduates of all backgrounds commonly perceived biased statements in college classrooms and that they preferred professors to directly address bias rather than ignoring it. Similarly, participants in the current study placed the responsibility for classes on the professor, even when their negative experiences consisted almost exclusively of the derogatory or ignorant comments of their peers. This seemed due to participants' expectations that it is the professor's duty to challenge and moderate such comments.

Specifically, participants valued professors who were direct, rather than avoidant, and able to manage difficult conversations. Students also valued professors who used their expertise to reduce defensiveness and speak convincingly about race-related topics. Vacarr (2003) described an anecdote from her personal teaching experience in which she processed a "hot moment" in her diversity class, though tempted to avoid confronting it directly, in order to provide her students with honest discussion. The findings of the current study support the importance of such moments in allowing professors to demonstrate that they able to converse openly about race.

Class Content

Very little is known about the content of multicultural education on college campuses, and consequently about specifically what material in multicultural education impacts students. Brown's (2004) study of White students in various multicultural courses showed that those that begin by reducing resistance were the most successful. No study was identified that addressed what material in multicultural classes most benefits students of color. In the current study, students of color stated definitively that what they valued most, in terms of what is taught in their multicultural classes, were conversations about race and power. They were the most interested and benefited the most from classes that addressed racial inequality, oppression, and privilege. In fact, they were critical of classes that discussed racial differences without clearly relating these differences to injustices, past and present, and unequal access to power. In contrast, Bruch, Higbee and Siaka (2007) noted that White students tended not to frame what they learned in multicultural classes in terms of privilege and oppression. This suggests that what students of color want and learn from multicultural education may be drastically different from their White peers.

Personal Nature of Race Knowledge and Its Impact on Pedagogy

In addition to the importance of speaking openly on race and power, another theme emerged in this study with implications for successful multicultural pedagogy: the personal nature of knowledge about race. Study participants repeatedly differentiated between knowledge learned from books and knowledge learned from experience, specifically in relation to race. Though this distinction has not been made in empirical

studies of multicultural education, it is a central tenet of CRT, which claims that knowledge is experiential (Delgado Bernal, 2002). In this study, participants' preferences for experiential knowledge led students to prefer professors who self-disclosed in classes and engaged students in interactive experiences by using activities and videos. The importance of personal knowledge of race also led students to struggle with the importance of a professor's personal background. Participants praised professors of color who were able to use their experiences to convey a deep understanding of race-related concerns, as well as empathy for students. Many stated that such professors were the first to challenge them academically and had become valued mentors. Overall, students felt that White professors would struggle when leading diversity classes that deal with race, though they did not want to rule out the possibility that a White professor with a clear understanding of race and power, who was willing to speak openly about racial privilege, could be successful.

The importance of personal knowledge about race may explain why discussion (Lenington, 1999; Peterson, 2000; Wright, 2009) and films, presentations, and stories (Peterson, 2000) have been shown to be the most significant factors in how well students, regardless of their race or ethnicity, learn about diversity. Participants in the current study appreciated how safe discussions allowed them to share their personal experiences and fostered togetherness in the class. Because of the importance of feeling recognized and known as a person in diversity classes, students in this study advocated for small class sizes, even in the range of less than ten students per class. This echoed Lenington's (1999) finding that graduate students, most of whom are White, wanted smaller multicultural classes.

Neutral Experiences

No research was found that addressed students of color having a neutral experience of multicultural education, in which taking a multicultural class was just like taking any other class. The current study suggested that this is indeed a rare phenomenon. Students who had a relatively neutral experience of multicultural education seemed to have enrolled in classes where race was not discussed in relation to power and where discussion was lacking, therefore avoiding the most common triggers for either positive or negative experiences.

The Impact of Multicultural Education

This study addressed the question of how multicultural education impacts students of color. The existing literature appears to point in a few different directions when answering this question. Multicultural education appears to improve attitudes towards other groups (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000), openness to diversity (Pascarella & Edison, 1996), and perspective taking (Gurin et al., 2003) for White students but not for students of color. Engberg (2004) argued that, because of the tendency to group students of color with White students, it was difficult to interpret research showing that multicultural education decreases racial bias. Overall, previous research has shown that students of color benefit less than White students from multicultural education (Engberg, 2004). Some research has even suggested that multicultural education is harmful for students of color (Lenington, 1999). On the other hand, some studies have identified specific positive effects for students of color, such as increased identify formation (Kiang & Emura, 1997; Zirkel, 2008), also reported in the current study. In addition, educators

have argued that multicultural education provides positive experiences for students of color (Quaye, 2009; Solorzano et al., 2000). The results of this current study provide a potential way to understand these seeming contradictions, as previous research did not attempt to account for specific course factors in relation to course impact. Students of color in this study reported significant variation in their experience of multicultural education. As described, whether they benefitted at all from a multicultural class depended largely on the professor, who determined the tenor of class discussions as well as how much the class would address race and power.

Students in the current study who had negative experiences of multicultural education did not seem affected as much as students with positive experiences, most likely due to the fact that their negative experiences were very much like what students had become accustomed to in other classes. Students of color who had positive experiences reported that multicultural courses impacted them in a variety of ways, some of which were the same as those reported by predominantly White students in previous studies, such as greater social involvement (Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005), more cultural awareness, more engagement in social activism (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 2005), increased perspective-taking, better cultural awareness (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado, 2005), better complex thinking skills (Hurtado, 2005), and decreased prejudice (Chang, 2002; Martin, 2010; Palmer, 2000, Wright, 2009).

In theory, multicultural education is supposed to provide students of color with unique benefits, such as increased engagement and power through increasing their visibility and representation in the curriculum (Chesler et al., 2005; Quaye, 2009; Solorzano et al., 2000). Indeed, the current study found that positive experiences of

multicultural education led many students of color to feel validated and recognized, with a stronger sense of their own identity. As in Lenington's (1999) study of graduate students, the undergraduate students of color in this study felt appreciated and empowered by positive experiences with multicultural education. Some reported feeling more connected and less isolated then before. In addition, study participants noted that multicultural education gave them the skills, specifically the terminology, and confidence to speak about their experiences. They felt more competent to engage in conversations about race and ethnicity, supported by an understanding of the inequalities throughout history and in contemporary society. A number reported feeling pride in their racial and ethnic identities for the first time. In fact, in their enthusiasm to continue conversations begun in the classroom, many described talking with friends and family about multicultural classes. This suggests that one of the most important functions of multicultural education for students of color is helping them find their voices.

Tatum (2003) has described how students of color may find an increasing awareness of racism in our society painful. Some participants in the current study likewise stated they felt overwhelmed and at times discouraged by their heightened sense of racial injustices in society. A few reported internal struggles upon learning about race and power imbalances and feeling frustrated and conflicted as a result.

Feedback on Multicultural Education

Finally, this study asked students of color for their criticisms and suggestions regarding multicultural education and what they thought about the idea of multicultural

education as a whole. This study revealed overwhelming support among students of color for multicultural education, despite significant criticisms.

Criticisms and Suggestions

Even students whose experiences of multicultural education were primarily positive expressed criticisms and suggestions for improvement. Most commonly, students were critical of the relatively small amount of the college curriculum devoted to diversity and multiculturalism. Study participants wanted race and ethnicity concerns integrated into the curriculum as a whole, rather than relegated to a single class requirement. Some were also critical of the menu approach adopted by the university, casting a doubtful eye upon some of the courses which fulfill the diversity requirement. Their criticisms have been foreshadowed by scholars like Brown and Ratcliff (1998), Schneider (2001), and Zirkel (2008), who have likewise argued that colleges need to go beyond what has been done towards a more radical transformation of higher education. A number of students expressed their frustration at not having been taught about race and ethnicity until college, stating that these topics should be addressed throughout the entirety of education.

Students in the current study also frequently expressed a desire for more racial and ethnic diversity in their multicultural classes. This request has been echoed by students of all backgrounds in Lenington's (1999) study of graduate students. Students in the current study believed that having more students of color in diversity classes would elevate the level of discussion, leading to more in-depth conversations and helping to minimize tokenism and stereotyping. Students also described an increased sense of comfort and willingness to speak out when surrounded by other students of color.

Most students in this study had taken only a handful, at most, of classes that focused on race and ethnicity. A few students, however, with majors or minors in Ethnic Studies had taken several classes that fulfill the university's diversity requirement. These students tended to feel multicultural classes were repetitive and geared towards an introductory level. They, along with some other students, longed for more conversations about solutions to the problems of racial inequality and injustice. Their desire for multicultural education to have a more practical component is in line with Tanaka's (1998) suggestion that students must be taught to apply multicultural knowledge to their everyday lives.

Support

Even students who were critical of specific multicultural classes, or whose experiences of multicultural education were primarily negative, were adamant in their support of multicultural and diversity classes in the college curriculum. This is congruent with previous research which has shown that students of color tend to support multicultural education at higher rates than White students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Altbach et al., 2002; Bruch, Higbee, & Siaka, 2007; Smith, 2006; Stephens, 1999). Bruch, Higbee, and Siaka (2007) likewise found that students of color support multicultural education even when they do not particularly care for multicultural classes. The current study may help explain this seeming contradiction, as students with negative experiences nonetheless valued those experiences for exposing issues related to race and racial inequality that are usually hidden and unspoken. In general, however, students of color in the current study enthusiastically endorsed the inclusion of multicultural

education in the curriculum. Many students who had positive experiences of multicultural education believed that the courses they had taken should be mandatory for all students and expressed regret that some students would miss out on the opportunity to learn about race and power. This finding expands upon Martin's (2010) examination of a single multicultural course, which many students of all backgrounds believed should be a required course.

Revisiting Models of Multicultural Education

Though not designed for this purpose, this study provided empirical support for the models of multicultural education set forth by Banks (1994) and Kitano (1997). Specifically, Banks' arguments that the curriculum must present diverse materials were echoed in students' support for multicultural classes. Banks argued that classes should include positive images of diverse groups, in order to reduce prejudice. The current study suggested that the inclusion of positive images not only reduces prejudice but also increases pride and a sense of validation for students of color. Students of color also endorsed the use of multifaceted pedagogy that embraces different ways of presenting knowledge, including acknowledging the knowledge of students, as described by Banks.

The dimension of Banks' model that received the least direct support was his insistence that multicultural education must involve not only teaching cultural content but presenting a critical stance towards knowledge construction. No student described learning to take a critical approach to knowledge itself as part of a multicultural class. Students, however, were insistent that multicultural courses must take a critical stance towards history and the unequal distribution of power in contemporary society by

discussing privilege and oppression in relation to race. Their appreciation of critical stances may indicate a willingness or even latent desire for Banks' more philosophical and encompassing view of knowledge construction, but it did not appear that any of the classes they took embraced Banks' approach.

Kitano's (1997) model of multicultural education appears to more accurately describe multicultural classes as experienced by students in this study. Kitano described three types of courses: exclusive, inclusive, and transformed. The exclusive course, which either ignores nontraditional perspectives or presents them in a stereotyped manner, seems characteristic of what students of color experience outside of multicultural courses. Kitano's inclusive course, which mostly presents mainstream perspectives but adds other perspectives, may be a rough analogue to a multicultural course in which cultural content is presented but power differences remain unaddressed. His transformational course, which actively challenges tradition and values student input along with the professor's input, appears to accurately describe what students in the current study experienced as a positive multicultural class.

Revisiting Criticisms of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has received criticism from different perspectives. Critics have argued that multicultural education is divisive, undemocratic, and essentializing and that it creates defensiveness (D'Souza, 1991a, 1991b; Tanaka, 1998; Webster, 2002). That some students of color feel more isolated, discouraged, or more likely to perceive racism in society after taking a multicultural class was evident in this study, which could be misconstrued as evidence that multicultural education is divisive. These students,

however, characterized this rise in negative emotions as a change in their awareness level for which they felt appreciative, despite negative consequences. In other words, some students simply felt more aware of the divisiveness that already existed in society and in their lives prior to taking a multicultural class, rather than that the class itself was responsible for divisiveness. In addition, roughly the same number of students in the current study felt the opposite emotions to what these critics have assumed would result from multicultural education. A number of students stated that they felt less angry, less isolated, and more forgiving of others (specifically of White people) after taking a multicultural class. One student even stated that a multicultural class had increased her sense of patriotism.

Others critics have argued that multicultural education doesn't go far enough to help students of color, making only cosmetic changes while allowing underlying inequalities to persist (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 2006; Platt, 2002). A number of students agreed that they would like more focus on solutions, more depth, and a more radical transformation of the curriculum than what multicultural education currently offers. One student expressed disillusionment with multicultural education and a belief that it, along with diversity, had become a meaningless term. Students agreed, however, that multicultural classes were an important first step towards greater equality in education. Given the number of students who had become involved in community activism as a result of taking a multicultural class, the charge that multicultural education only creates trivial change seems at least partially unwarranted.

The criticisms that have been leveled against multicultural education, which include charges that multicultural education goes too far and not far enough, received at

least some support from students in relation to some classes in the current study. What is important to consider in relation to these criticisms, though, is the considerable variation in the content and quality of multicultural classes and how students experienced those classes. Though one or more criticisms might apply to specific classes, no criticisms applied to all classes. This finding points to the importance of paying attention to specific factors in multicultural education, such as course content and instructor expertise, in distinguishing its effects.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Aside from the obvious limitation of drawing participants from a single university, other aspects of this study likely impacted its findings. Most participants in this study were recruited because professors agreed to allow a recruitment visit to their classrooms. It seems likely that the professors who allowed recruitment in their classes tended to be more conscientious and open than average. In addition, by focusing on classes that address race and ethnicity as a primary topic, this study addressed only a small section of what is considered multicultural education. Multicultural classes that address race as a secondary topic may be less likely to be taught by faculty with commensurate expertise or skill. I speculate that both the recruitment strategy and the focus on classes that deal with race led to an over-representation of positive experiences. To create a more complete picture of multicultural education as experienced by students of color, a larger range of classes should be investigated. Exploring a larger range of classes could also yield information about how specific course factors such as the ratio of students of color to White students influences diversity classes.

Conversely, expanding the number of students interviewed would likely yield more information about how student variables such as racial or ethnic background, amount and quality of prior exposure to multicultural education, geographic and socioeconomic background, and racial identity development influence how students experience multicultural education. The findings from this study suggest that students who had positive experiences of multicultural education felt an increased sense of identity, but this deserves further exploration. In addition, a couple of students suggested that gender is a significant factor in how students of color experience multicultural education. The students who mentioned gender believed that female students of color are more vulnerable to attack. This study, however, did not address directly address this possibility, so it is unclear how gender factors into the experience of students of color in the classroom. This is an important area for future study.

Perhaps the most important implication for future research generated by this study arises from the tremendous variability in how students of color experienced multicultural education. In particular, the professor played a major role in determining whether students of color benefited from multicultural classes at all. Wellburn (1999) has argued that more attention needs to be paid to the content and delivery of multicultural courses. The findings from this study suggested that attending to factors such as the professor is a necessity when examining multicultural courses, especially when researching effects. This study also suggests that it would be productive for research to also attend to the content of multicultural courses that deal with race, specifically in how much the course addresses race and power, as well as how those issues are addressed.

Implications for Practice

This study yielded a number of concrete recommendations related to maximizing the benefit of multicultural courses for students of color.

1. Multicultural courses should be taught by professors who are open and direct, are able to facilitate difficult discussions, and have a high awareness of race in relation to privilege and oppression.
2. Multicultural courses should address race in relation to power, covering topics such as privilege, oppression, and historical and contemporary sources of racial inequality.
3. Professors should utilize teaching methods that foster interactivity, with the primary focus on creating safe and productive discussions.

Furthermore, the study participants who had the opportunity to do so cited taking a diversity class composed primarily or exclusively of students of color as a highlight of their education. The findings of this study therefore also suggest that students of color should be given more opportunities to take diversity classes that are designed specifically for them, rather than for White students. This recommendation carries with it political and practical implications that are beyond the scope of this paper to address. Given the overwhelmingly positive reaction to such classes by students of color, however, this study clearly indicates the benefits of making those classes more widely available. The finding that students of color and White students seem to have drastically different needs when it comes to diversity classes will, I hope, encourage educators to be creative in structuring diversity courses, perhaps beginning such courses with separate sections for

students of color and White students before bringing students together for multicultural dialogues.

More generally, students felt that teaching diversity classes requires special skills and that, because of the sensitive subject matter, professors have the ability to inflict more harm in these courses than others when they are poorly taught. Students also noted that the quality of instruction in diversity courses is wildly uneven. Given these observations, increased oversight of diversity instruction may be warranted. This increased oversight might include in-depth, specialized evaluation of diversity courses, or a requirement that instructors of these courses undergo specialized training or otherwise demonstrate competency in, for example, managing difficult discussions. This study suggests that increased oversight and training is also needed for those instructors who are not experts in race and ethnicity issues who may address race and ethnicity within the context of a non-multicultural course. In fact, given the overwhelmingly negative experiences of diversity education in non-multicultural focused classes, mandating a minimal level of knowledge about how to address diversity issues for all faculty members, regardless of discipline, may be the most expedient way to improve the experience of students of color in the classroom.

Implications for Policy

On May 12, 2010, just as the primary data collection for this study was wrapping up, Arizona governor Jan Brewer signed Arizona House Bill 2281 (2010), the so-called Ethnic Studies bill, into law. This bill was designed to prevent schools from teaching courses such as Mexican American studies based upon the premise that those courses

"promote the overthrow of the United States government," "promote resentment toward a race or class of people," "are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group," and "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals."

That this current study cannot address the specific content and effects of any course taught in public schools in Arizona is obvious. Nonetheless, the sentiments of House Bill 2281 reflect popular notions about what multicultural education entails, inscribed into law. The results of this study clearly contradict each premise of this law. Indeed, by promoting forgiveness, appreciation for individual experiences, and even patriotism, many diversity classes in this study produced effects exactly opposite of those presumed by the Arizona bill. Opponents of the bill have already argued that ethnic studies classes in Arizona similarly do not fit the description of this new law. Unfortunately, the lack of empirical evidence about these and other classes that deal with race and ethnicity has created a vacuum that allows popular notions such as the ones in House Bill 2281 to gain traction. The passage of House Bill 2281 signals, if nothing else, the need for a better understanding, based upon empirical research rather than speculative politics, of multicultural education.

Implications for Social Justice

In accordance with the principles of CRT, this study aimed to contribute to the emancipation of students of color (Parker & Lynn, 2009; Patton, 2002), to centering the voices of people who are usually silenced, and to identifying inequalities (Patton, 2002). I believe that the results of this study clearly demonstrated the value of listening to students of color. Through describing their experiences, students of color made several important

contributions towards understanding both the value and the limits of multicultural education. Positive multicultural education had the potential to empower and liberate students of color. Students were also able to identify critical components of successful multicultural classes. It is my hope that the power of their voices persuades others to listen to what they have to say. I believe that working towards social justice must include working to ensure that multicultural education meets the needs of students of color as well as the needs of White students.

Conclusion

Colleges and universities in the United States have made important strides over the past several decades by opening their doors to students of color. Though significant progress has been made, efforts to transform institutions of higher education in order to best serve these students are, I believe, in their early stages. Multicultural education, an integral part of these efforts, has come under fire recently for how it affects students of color and, through them, democracy itself. *Listening* to students of color reveals complexities that belie the idea that multicultural education affects students in any single way. What unites the students I interviewed, however, is their belief that their stories and histories matter. For them, education works best when it acknowledges that simple fact.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Text of Email to Faculty Members

My name is Jinna Lee, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Psychology. I am conducting research for my dissertation on how undergraduate students of color experience multicultural education. I would like to recruit students from your class for participation in my study.

If possible, I'll speak to your class for a few minutes, leave contact information, and ask interested students to fill out cards with their contact information. I'll bring an envelope for the cards. All you would need to do is collect the cards and drop the envelope in campus mail.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you!

Many thanks,

Jinna Lee
Doctoral Candidate
Counseling Psychology
Jinna.Lee@utah.edu

Text of Email to Student Groups

What do you think about multicultural education? Would you like to share your experiences in the diversity requirement class? Are you interested in making your voice heard on this important topic?

I am a graduate student in Educational Psychology, and I am conducting research for my dissertation on how students of color experience multicultural education. I am looking to interview people who meet these requirements:

-Undergraduates at the University of Utah
-Identify as people of color or ethnic minority
-Completed the diversity requirement in the last year
-Raised primarily in the U.S.

If you are interested or have questions, please email me at Jinna.Lee@utah.edu. The initial interview will last around 90 minutes, with opportunities for further participation.

Thank you!

Jinna Lee
Graduate Student
Counseling Psychology

Script for Visiting Groups and Classes

Hi, my name is Jinna, and I'm a graduate student in counseling psychology. I am studying how students of color experience multicultural education, specifically the diversity class requirement. Basically, I want to know what it's like for students of color in these classes and what they think about how diversity is taught.

I am looking to interview people who identify as students of color and who completed the diversity requirement in the last year. I am limiting my study to people raised primarily in the U.S. to keep things simple.

If you decide to participate, I would interview you for about an hour and a half to start. I would then invite you to participate in a discussion group later with some other students to get your feedback on how I'm interpreting your interviews. You would also have opportunities to follow my research and to attend a presentation where I talk about what I found.

The aim of my study overall is to make sure students of color are getting their needs met and to help improve multicultural education. I see you as the experts and as the people whose voices should be heard. I look forward to hopefully working with some of you, and thanks in advance!

Any questions?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW MATERIALS

Interview Protocol

Note: Bolded questions were added after initial coding

Study Info
Summary
Confidentiality: limits, possibility of ID, sharing data, persist after study, choose to delete info
Consent
You are the expert
Anything in particular that interested you about this study?
What reasons did you have for participating?
Anything you want to discuss?

Basic Student Info
What is your major?
How do you self-identify?

Basic Class Info
What classes have you taken that meet the diversity requirement?
Department?
Topic?
Professor?
What was it about?
Did you discuss power, oppression, privilege in your class?
How is class structured? (Lecture, discussion)
What kinds of assignments? Liked it?
What kinds of feedback? Helpful?

Detailed Class Info
*****What was the first day like?
What was it like for you in this class?
What experiences stand out to you from this class? Hot moments?
Why?
Short term effects?
Long term effects?
Positive experiences?
Negative experiences?
What did you learn?
Different from taking other classes?
Affect others?
Positive/negative aspects?
How safe did you feel in the class? Why?
Pressures in class that White student didn't face? (informant, too emotional)
Do you feel this class was designed with you in mind? How so or for who, if not you?

Do you feel this class will help your everyday life/practical effects? Open your mind?
Changed how you feel about other people? About yourself?
Like to say something to professor/other students about this?
Different from being White student? Good? Harder? Easier? Negative?
What "role" do you play in diversity classes? Where did you learn that?

How do you choose how to participate in diversity classes? Why do you choose to speak or not to?
- **-Professor openness and expertise**
- **-Other students of color and their openness**
- **-White students?**

Do you ever feel the need to speak up? Why? Special responsibility?
Do you ever let things go to preserve energy?
How important is it to have other students of color in the class?
What is importance of others participating? Of discussion in general?
What do you notice about other students' reactions and how yours are different?
Do you get more attention in diversity classes than in other classes? What is your reaction to this? How do you deal with extra attention? Why?
Has the class helped prepare you for other classes? For life?
Effect of LDS culture?
What have you learned about people of color? What have you learned about Whites? What have you learned about yourself?
What would your ideal diversity class be like? –Content, professor, other students
What is the worst diversity class you could imagine?
Diversity classes are a mix of good and bad. Agree?

Professor Info
Professor factors
Professor race/ethnicity
Professor's philosophy or approach
Did professor seem like an expert?
How did it help? Hinder?
Suggestions for professors?
Things done well?
Why? What factors?
Advice for avoiding/repeating experiences?
Personal qualities/other qualification professors need to teach these classes?

Other Students
Who else was in the class?
Racial/ethnic makeup of class? How many students?
Relationships with classmates?
Stand out?
How did classmates interact with you?
How classmates affect your experience?
Helped you learn? Hindered you?

External Factors
Any other life experiences/background that you think influenced how this class was for you?
Talk about classes with others (friends, family)?
Why? How? What reactions?

University Factors
Why do you think university requires these classes?
What do you think of requiring these classes?
What do you think of how these classes are taught?

Criticisms?
Suggestions for improvement?
How has it been to be a student of color at the U?
Do you feel campus welcomes you? Values you? Hears you? Do you feel safe on campus? Connected? Part of community? How does this relate to the class?
Do you feel you have struggles/challenges White students don't face?
Racial climate, stereotyping? Do classes help?

Other Experiences
*****Have you experienced multicultural/diversity education in other venues?
Classes? Workshops? Outreaches?
Diversity issues in non-diversity classes?

Multicultural Theory
What is your own sense of multiculturalism/diversity?
Multicultural education is supposed to be empowering. What does empowering mean to you?
Was your class empowering?
In what ways?
*****In what ways it is not?
Materials diverse?
Knowledge critically examined?
Prejudice reduced?
Pedagogy diverse and equitable?
Feel empowered to create positive school climate?
Has taken these classes increased your activism/pride/awareness?

Student Identity
Racial/Ethnic ID questions
What do you think I should have asked in interview that is in questionnaire?

Anything else I should have asked/ you'd like to talk about?
Questions for me?

Options for continuing participation
-Updates on study
-See report to delete info
-Focus groups
-Presentation on results
-See final report
-Recruit!

Identity Measure (Adopted from Sellers)

Centrality

1. Overall, being a person of color has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
2. In general, being a person of color is an important part of my self-image.
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other people of color.
4. Being a person of color is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
5. I have a strong attachment to other people of color
6. Being a person of color is an important reflection of who I am.
7. Being a person of color is not a major factor in my social relationships.

Private Regard

1. I feel good about people of color.
2. I am happy that I am a person of color.
3. I feel that people of color have made major accomplishments and advancements.
4. I often regret that I am a person of color
5. I am proud to be a person of color.
6. I feel that people of color have made valuable contributions to society.

Public Regard

1. Overall, people of color are considered good by others.
2. In general, others respect people of color.
3. Most people consider people of color, on the average, to be more ineffective than White people.
4. People of color are not respected by the broader society.
5. In general, other groups view people of color in a positive manner.
6. Society views people of color as an asset.

Assimiliation

1. People of color who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.
2. A sign of progress is that people of color are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.
3. Because America is predominantly White, it is important that people of color go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with White people.
4. People of color should strive to be full members of the American political system.
5. People of color should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.
6. People of color should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.
7. People of color should feel free to interact socially with White people.
8. People of color should view themselves as being American first and foremost.
9. The plight of people of color in America will improve only when they are in important positions within the system.

Humanist

1. The values of people of color should not be inconsistent with human values.

2. People of color should have the choice to marry interracially.
3. People of color and Whites have more commonalities than differences.
4. People of color should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.
5. People of color would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on issues specific to people of color.
6. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as a person of color.
7. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.
8. People of color should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.
9. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.

Oppressed Minority

1. The same forces which have led to the oppression of people of color have also led to the oppression of other groups.
2. The struggle for the liberation of people of color in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.
3. People of color should learn about the oppression of other groups.
4. People of color should treat other oppressed groups as allies.
5. The racism people of color experience is similar to that of other minority groups.
6. There are other people who experience injustice and indignities similar to people of color.
7. People of color will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups.
8. People of color should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.
9. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.

Nationalist

1. It is important for people of color to surround their children with art, music and literature created by other people of color.
2. People of color should not marry interracially.
3. People of color would be better off if they adopted values specific to their race/culture.
4. People of color must organize themselves into a separate political force.
5. Whenever possible, people of color should buy from other businesses run by other people of color.
6. A thorough knowledge of the history of people of color is very important for people of color today.
7. People of color and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.
8. White people should never be trusted where people of color are concerned.

MEIM

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
3. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
4. I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.
5. I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.
6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Identity Measure Abridged (Adopted from Sellers)

1. In general, being a person of color is an important part of my self-image.
2. Being a person of color is not a major factor in my social relationships.
3. I feel that people of color have made valuable contributions to society.
4. Most people consider people of color, on the average, to be more ineffective than White people.
5. In general, other groups view people of color in a positive manner.
6. A sign of progress is that people of color are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.
7. People of color should view themselves as being American first and foremost.
8. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as a person of color.
9. People of color should treat other oppressed groups as allies.
10. It is important for people of color to surround their children with art, music and literature created by other people of color.
11. Whenever possible, people of color should buy from other businesses run by other people of color.
12. A thorough knowledge of the history of people of color is very important for people of color today.
13. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
14. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.

APPENDIX C

FEEDBACK MATERIALS

Feedback Handout for Focus Group and Follow-ups

1. **The Unspoken.** Race-related differences and oppressions permeate lives yet are rarely discussed. This leads to dissonance, discomfort, and feelings of invalidation and a desire to "speak the unspoken."

2. **Personal Knowledge.** Root of race-related knowledge is personal. Students' experiences are often invalidated, dismissed, or stereotyped.

3. **Protecting Yourself**. Students learn to set boundaries for participation and take on "roles" to protect themselves.

4. **Classroom Experiences**
   Negative Experiences
   Professors lack expertise, do not manage class, are avoidant
   Blatant mistakes/stereotyping

   Neutral Experiences
   Recognition of difference without power
   Discussion lacking

   Positive Experiences
   Professor is expert, open, direct
   Other students are supportive
   Classes small and interactive
   Explicit acknowledgement of power
   Personal experiences valued and acknowledged

5. **Speaking the Unspoken**
   Validation
   Learning language to describe experiences
   Increased awareness/identity
   Empowered/Increased activism
   Classes feel more applicable to life

6. **Now What?**
   Classes feel repetitive
   Solutions lacking

Arguments:

- Common experiences of wanting acknowledgement, recognition, discussion around race/ethnicity in relation to power and privilege
- Power of classroom as a space to have conversation about race and racism
- Need more classes with minority-majority. Who is education for?

- Professors must take responsibility for their classes. They must be experts, must have personal qualities that allow them to be open and deal with difficult discussions.

Internet Survey

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/multiedstudy

1. **The Unspoken.** Race-related issues permeate lives yet are rarely discussed. This leads to dissonance, discomfort, and feelings of invalidation and a desire to "speak the unspoken."

   Race is very difficult to discuss. Students expressed wanting to talk about race but not being able to have those conversations because it's awkward, people avoid the topic, they are afraid of making mistakes, and other reasons.

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

2. **Personal Knowledge.** Root of race-related knowledge is personal. Students' experiences are often invalidated, dismissed, or stereotyped.

   Many students stated that, unlike other things in school, personal experience with race and racism was crucial to learning. Most students preferred professors who talked about personal experiences and felt they learned from hearing others' stories.

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

3. **Managing Yourself**. Students learn to set boundaries for participation, use strategies to determine when to speak up, and sometimes take on "roles" to protect themselves.

   Many students said they put significant time and energy into deciding when and how to speak up about diversity issues. They worried about how to express themselves correctly and often felt regret about either speaking up or not speaking up.

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

4. **Classroom Experiences**

   Negative Experiences
   Professors lack expertise, do not manage class, are avoidant
   Blatant mistakes/stereotyping

   Neutral Experiences
   Recognition of difference without addressing racism and discrimination
   Discussion lacking

   Positive Experiences
   Professor is expert, open, direct
   Other students are supportive
   Classes small and interactive
   Explicit acknowledgement of racism and discrimination
   Personal experiences valued and acknowledged

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

5. **Speaking the Unspoken (Effects of positive experiences)**

   Validation
   Learning language to describe experiences
   Increased awareness/identity
   Empowered/Increased activism
   Classes feel more applicable to life

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

6. **Now What?**
   Classes feel repetitive
   Solutions lacking
   Need more

   A few students who had taken several diversity classes expressed frustration about not learning more.

   ☐ Rings True ☐ Doesn't Ring True ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

   Please explain:

Arguments:

- Common experiences of wanting acknowledgement, recognition, discussion around race and racism
- Need more classes with more students of color.
- Power of classroom as a space to have conversation about race and racism
- Professors must take responsibility for their classes. They must be experts, must have personal qualities that allow them to be open and deal with difficult discussions.

☐ Agree ☐ Don't Agree ☐ Unsure, N/A, or Both

Please explain:

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH ACTIVITY RECORDS

Condensed Audit Trail: Timeline of Research Activities

November 16, 2009	Began recruiting for study. Created recruitment materials.
November 18, 2009	Visited first classes to recruit for study.
November 19, 2009	Researched ethnic identify measures to include.
December 14, 2009	Met with Dr. Smith to discuss ethnic ID measures. Decided to do combination instruments/interview to begin, then move to interview only. Will look again at Robert Sellers measures.
January 9, 2010	Met with Julie Goudie-Nice to discuss interview set-up and details. Planned to set-up transcription and purchase recording devices.
January 15, 2010	Purchased recording device.
January 25, 2010	Wrote first draft of interview protocol.
February 1, 2010	Sent out email recruiting participants from last semester's class visits.
February 9, 2010	Conducted first interview.
February 17, 2010	Conducted second interview.
February 19, 2010	Conducted third interview.
February 22, 2010	Conducted interview #4. Attended research group meeting. Discussed recruiting issues and emerging themes.
February 23, 2010	Conducted interview #5.
February 24, 2010	Conducted interview #6
March 1, 2010	Conducted interview #7
March 3, 2010	Conducted interview #8 but unsure if person is qualified for study. I will ask in the QRG next meeting.
March 4, 2010	Conducted interview #9
March 4-8, 2010	Coded interviews #1 and #2
March 8, 2010	Organized codes into sets. Attended research group meeting and discussed inclusion of interview with girl who hadn't taken class and recruiting more men actively.

March 9, 2010	Coded interview #3 Came up with more questions to include based on first codings (See journal for details.)
March 10, 2010	Began recruitment of student groups. Sent emails to 5 CESA student groups asking if I could attend their next meetings. Send email to referrals. Conducted interview #10.
March 12, 2010	Conducted interview #11.
March 18, 2010	Coded interview #4 and #5.
March 23, 2010	Conducted interview #12.
April 5-6, 2010	Visited diversity classes for recruiting.
April 13, 2010	Conducted interview #13. Tried to visit BSU.
April 16, 2010	Visited MeCHA for recruiting. Tried to visit PISA.
April 20, 2010	Completed several recruiting tasks: emailed remaining classes, contacted participants about approval of compensation, contacted new referrals. Visited ITSA for recruiting.
April 21, 2010	Completed interview #14. Scheduled several interviews. Contacted BSU for recruiting.
April 23, 2010	Conducted interview #15.
April 25, 2010	Attended research group meeting.
April 28, 2010	Last recruiting push.
April 29, 2010	Coded interview #8. (Forgot to record when interviews #6 and #7 were

	coded.)
May 3, 2010	Conducted interviews #16 and #17.
May 4, 2010	Coded interviews #9, #10, #11
May 5, 2010	Coded interview #12
May 6, 2010	Secondary coding, created first outline of how it will be organized.
May 7, 2010	Coded interview #13. Received more referrals for male participants – will contact them to perhaps schedule for next week.
May 15-20	Recruiting for focus groups.
May 25, 2010	Conducted Focus group #1
June 3, 2010	Conducted Follow up interview #1.
June 5, 2010	Coded Focus group.
June 6, 2010	Coded Follow up interview #1.
June 7, 2010	Conducted Follow up interview #2.
June 8, 2010	Conducted Follow up interview #3 and #4.
June 10, 2010	Sent out link to internet survey.
June 13, 2010	Coded Follow-up interviews #2-4.
June 23, 2010	Coded internet survey results.
July 7, 2010	Completed first draft of results
September 17, 2010	Completed revision of Chapters 1 and 2.
September 18, 2010	Completed revision of Chapter 3 and first draft of Chapter 4.
October 9, 2010	Completed dissertation draft for defense.

Sample Journal Entry/Memo

February 19, 2010

MEMO: Emerging theme: importance of having other students of color in the class to feel safety and validation.

MEMO: The feeling of being "home" in a class of other students of color.

One thing I am noticing – how powerful the urge is to speak and to share experiences of racism with someone who is sympathetic. There is so much pent up desire to be able to tell the story of racism, hurt, discrimination, invalidation, etc. that it just comes pouring out.

Interviewee #3: Wore work shirt, had pictures of family on wall and framed picture and model of LDS temple, very neat house. Reserved at first, spoke analytically and at a distance, suddenly teared up and cried when speaking of an incident she would not share with a White person. Sweet smile, asked about my own identification, said my name, friendly. Emphasis on family.

Complete List of Codes

Note: Bolded titles were added to help classify codes. Interpretive comments and notes are italicized. Codes are not italicized or bolded.

One of the key codes:
Wanting to speak the unspoken ** This might be the big framework**
Speaking the unspoken
Wanting to learn about personal background
Desiring exposure of difference
Desiring exposure of negative history
Opportunity to address difficult topics
Wanting more discussion
Wondering what others think
Discussion increasing comfort
Subtle not blatant
Wanting people to be uncomfortable!
"Everyone should take this class"

What classes should be about:
Validated experience
Importance of power discussion
Increased awareness and activism
Empowerment
Wanting to speak the unspoken: Discussion importance

Why unsafe: Vary in degrees
Feeling unsafe
Background: Felt unsafe
Worse in other classes
Better at U than before
Wanting more campus diversity
Wanting to speak the unspoken:
--What makes it even more painful is not being able to speak about it.
Heated debate

Sense of camaraderie with other students, sense that attack on other students is attack on self.

Feeling recognized only for their race/ethnicity/worried about playing into stereotypes
Expected to be spokesperson
Stereotyped
Seen as individual
Don't want attention
Looked to for approval
Embarassed

Encountering racism
Attacked or dismissed

Affirmative action

Feel safe

How people have learned to deal with it:
Personality factors
Outspoken
Family factors
Parents guidance
Taught to be self-reliant
Community factors
Growing up in White culture

Mediator role
Choosing not to be angry
Proud to educate
Diffusing tension

Educating Others
Correcting mistakes
Accepting spokesperson roles
Educating others
Internal need to education
Opportunistic education

Trying to explain others/ID with Whites
Educating others
Taking care of Whites
Explaining prejudiced reactions
Accepting mistakes

Desensitized from overexposure
Low expectations

Refusing spokesperson role
Racial battle fatigue

Positive
Enjoy standing out
Able to be expert
Speak up for self

To what degree have people internalized racism?
Preparing yourself for negative experiences
Alienation from own culture
Hiding anger

Managing self
Self-boundaries for participation
Selective sharing
Regret over speaking decisions
Assessing other students, both of color and White, and professor

Safety: Professor
Grapevine
Professor goodness grapevine
Professor importance *–Not in power in classroom, professors need to take the lead. Place which is supposed to be of truth. Should be evaluated more.*
Wanting more support from professor
Professor directness: *Wanting to speak the unspoken*
Teachers manage class
Professor support
Professor ethnicity importance
White professor difficulty relating
Professor White who gets it
Professor self-disclosure: *Because it's not about book learning. Something about diversity seems to require books and videos.*
Another theme: Videos
Professor expertise
Professor mistakes
***Something about academia itself needs to be altered to make class safe. More family like? Less focused on "books." – Heard a few times – not like reading it in a book.*

Safety: Other students
Very conscious of other students
Aware of "angry person" role
Wanting others to participate
Others students of color
Students of color seek each other out
Comfort with students of color
Students of color support each other
Wanting diversity in class
White students
Why unsafe: Fear of attack
Vulnerable to racism
Mostly White
White discomfort
Discomfort because White discomfort

Discomfort around Whites
Noticing other students reactions
White false belief of understanding
Respecting White honesty
Shock at others' prejudice
Others fear mistakes
Encountering ignorance
Importance of minority-majority classes—go back to look at all these examples

Safety: Class structure:
Interactive experiences
Learning material
Class size
Book learning versus personal learning
Feeling recognized as individual

What students learn
Importance of discussion-->(What people learn is almost all what other people think.)
Learning how you are viewed
Differences from other students of color
Noticing hierarchy of difference
Noticing difference from White students
Learning from other students
Learning about Whites
Exposure to other cultures
Understanding society
Good and bad

No representation to representation
Glad to be represented
Interested in class
Drawing on personal experience
Being more interested
Apply outside of class
Issues more pressing in diversity classes
Self invested in class
Opportunity to talk about personal life
Personal versus book knowing
Believing background makes class easier
Need to take power of classrooms seriously
***Another theme: I think everyone should know.*

If not aware before:
More awareness of racism
Painful learning of racism

Positive effects
Noticing personal prejudices

Approval of classes
Using power terminology
Professor as mentor (*because internalized feeling – can't succeed because of racism*)
Increasing pride
Discussing with family
Forgiveness: *Result of understanding why injustices exist rather than ignoring them, increased rather than decreased integration*
Rationale for requirement
Increased identity
Some students feel urgently – everyone should take this. Can be very hurt when others don't seem to care.
Some students have mentioned: it has helped me stay at U.

Discontent
Wanting more radicalism
More for Whites
Just getting through it
Just another class
Repetitive
Mentor leaving

General info:
Class content
Identification
Maybe self-selected conscientious/confident instructors invite me to recruit their classes

Misc:
Requirement
LDS culture helping
Self-selection into classes

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